

Postoperative Instructions: Elbow Radial Head Fracture

When You Get Home:

Rest for the remainder of the day.

Be Safe- stay in the care of responsible adult the first 24 hours.

Use Ice as much as possible: It may not fully cool the elbow below the dressing and bandage, but it is still beneficial.

20 minutes on/20 minutes off for regular ice packs/frozen peas

If you are using a Cold Therapy unit, use it according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Pain Medication:

Take your pain medication- it's better to stay ahead of the pain.

Oral Narcotic pain medicines (Vicodin, Percocet, Ultram, Codeine) help with pain, but can cause:

Drowsiness: Be Safe, don't drive, operate machinery, don't mix it with alcohol.

Stomach upset: Take with food, or try over the counter Zantac or Tums.

Constipation:

Drink enough fluids, use fiber supplements (Metamucil, Senokot)

Take Prune juice or Milk of Magnesia if still constipated after 2 days

You may take anti-inflammatory medication to help with pain and swelling.

Some patients are prescribed Toradol (Ketorolac): take every 6 hours for 4 days.

Ok to take with Pain Medications, not with other anti-inflammatories

After 4 days of Toradol, you can take other anti-inflammatory medicines like:

Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), Naproxen (Aleve), Lodine, Mobic, Celebrex

Go easy on the anti-inflammatory medications if you have stomach problems.

Dressing and Wound Care:

You will be in a sling and brace after surgery. You should keep them clean and dry.

You can change your dressing two days after surgery.

You will need to gently unstrap and remove the brace.

Place a clean gauze over the incision and re-wrap with the cotton bandage (not tightly).

You can Shower two days after surgery.

Use a shower chair or plastic shower chair to sit on in the shower.

You can remove the brace to shower, but keep the incision clean and dry.

Activities and Restrictions:

Sling: You will be in a sling and brace after surgery.

At your first postop visit we will remove your sutures.

We will plan to keep you arm in the brace for a several weeks, and we will have you start gentle range of motion exercises starting about 1-2 weeks after surgery.

You'll be getting around your house well within a few days.

Resume light activities (walking, etc.) after a few days.

Driving: Only after you are SAFE, which means:

Off pain medications, and able to control a vehicle safely

It can be difficult to control a car with one arm in a sling or splint.

Exercises: Begin exercises immediately:

Move your thumb and fingers around many times during the day

It is okay to gently move and lift your shoulder and shoulder blade and neck.

Physical therapy will give you gentle exercises starting a few weeks after surgery.

Problems or Questions? Call us at 925-600-7020

Feel free to call us if you have any concerns, or for:

Unrelenting pain, or increasing swelling or numbness or high fevers (over 101.5)

Continuous drainage or bleeding that is soaking your dressing

Chest pain, shortness of breath