Postoperative Instructions: Elbow Ulnar Nerve Decompression

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 splint, 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, operative 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 splint for the first week- Keep the postoperative splint clean and dry.
  - You may take a shower, but use a heavy plastic bag and tap the top around the leg to keep water from getting in.
  - Use a shower chair or plastic shower chair to sit on in the shower.
- Feeling/sensation: You may feel some increased tingling in the hand after surgery, as the nerve starts to heal.
  - This is normal. If the tingling becomes severe or is very painful, please give us a call.

Activities and Restrictions:
- Sling: You will be in a sling and splint for the first week after surgery.
  - At your first postop visit we will remove the splint and remove your suture.
  - We will plan to remove the splint at your first postop visit, and then you can start gently moving the elbow.
- 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
  - 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