

Post-operative Care following Shoulder Arthroscopy - Rotator Cuff Repair

You will be seen in the office for your first post-operative visit 7 to 10 days from your surgery. This appointment is often made when you book your surgery date. During this visit, you will be shown your intra-operative pictures, detailing the pathology in your shoulder. Your incisions will be checked and you will be given a prescription to begin physical therapy at this time. **If you are unsure of, or need to schedule, an appointment, call (516) 622-6040.**

WOUND CARE

You will have three to four small incisions on your shoulder following surgery. After removing your bandage, you will notice white Steri-strips covering your incisions. Since we used absorbable sutures to close, there is no need to remove them.

Your incisions will be covered with gauze, padding and a white foam tape. It is important to keep the surgical site as clean and dry as possible. You will remove this dressing 48 hours following surgery (If you had surgery on a Monday, the dressing would come off on Wednesday). Steri-strips in will be in place. They should be left on, and will be removed at your first post-operative visit.

In order to visualize the structures of your shoulder during surgery, fluid is placed into the shoulder joint. Often times, the fluid can leak out onto the dressing. This should be no cause for alarm.

You may shower following removal of your bandage. You should not put any soaps, lotions or ointments on the incisions. You may allow water to run over the incisions, which should be patted dry immediately after showering.

PAIN MANAGEMENT

You will be given a prescription for pain medication following your surgery. Understand that this medication may hinder your ability to drive. It is important to avoid drinking alcohol in combination with this medication. Take this medication as prescribed. It is common to have trouble sleeping in the early post-operative period due to pain and difficulty finding a comfortable position. It often helps to take a dosage of pain medication shortly before bedtime. Make sure you spread out your doses appropriately.

You may have gotten an ice sleeve that forms to your shoulder prior to surgery. This is a safe and effective way to manage your pain. You should be using this sleeve a few times per day, especially before bedtime. If you have any problems or questions with the actual set-up, contact to vendor who supplied the machine to you.

If you did not choose the ice sleeve, simply icing the area with a bag of frozen vegetables or an ice pack is recommended. Make sure that your surgical site is well

protected before applying ice. You may ice for up to 20 minutes at a time, about three times per day. Do not fall asleep with this ice on your shoulder, as prolonged exposure can damage your skin.

ACTIVITY

Following surgery you be placed into sling. You may also notice a rectangular pillow between your sling and your body. If you left the Ambulatory surgery center with the pillow attached, you should wear it until we instruct you otherwise (usually six weeks). If you did not have the pillow placed under your sling after surgery, you do NOT need to place it on yourself. In both cases, the sling will be worn for six weeks. It is important to frequently take your arm out of the sling to move your elbow and wrist. The sling will also come off for showering.

Driving is often an issue following this surgery. The necessary use of pain medication and slowed reaction time may pose a danger behind the wheel. In general, you may not drive under the influence of pain medication. It is unsafe to drive with only one usable arm. Therefore, the expected time you will return to driving is six weeks from your surgery date.

Physical therapy is in integral part of your success following surgery. We have a list of recommended physical therapists from Suffolk to Manhattan, who are trusted to safely and effectively rehabilitate your shoulder. You will start physical therapy after your first post-operative visit. Understand that the first six weeks of therapy mainly focuses on passive range of motion and pain management. Do not expect to be moving your shoulder or lifting any weights during this time. In general, you will spend between four and six months in physical therapy, depending on your progress, your prior activity status and your goals. You will be seen back in the office at six weeks, three months and six months from surgery to monitor your progress.

Your return to work is dependent on many factors and will be discussed at your first post-operative visit. The need to drive and/or have use of your arm will play a large role in planning your return date. Standing for prolonged periods of time in the early part of your post-operative period may be uncomfortable for your shoulder and work adjustments may need to be made. Generally, you may feel comfortable enough to return to work after 2 weeks if your job does not entail any lifting, reaching or driving. "Desk work" is usually manageable at this time.