

Distal Humerus ORIF Postoperative Instructions

General

A family member or caregiver may need to assist you for the next few weeks.

- Helps with basic movement and function
- Helps with household chores
- Helps ensure all medications are administered
- Helps provide emotional support for daily life and rehabilitation

Furniture may need to be rearranged to avoid tripping and falling.

In general, the more you are up and ambulating, the better you will do.

You may ice once every hour for up to 20 minutes, as needed, in the first few postoperative days.

If you had a nerve block, the effects may last 24 hours.

Activity

Non-weight bearing to the operative arm. You are in a splint until the first follow up appointment.

Do:

- Wear the sling for comfort. It is a good idea to wear it at night and when out-and-about to protect the arm.
- Perform active wrist and finger motion exercises several times per day.
- Follow your physical therapist's instructions.
- You may return to work with minimal use of the operative arm (ie desk work)

Do Not:

- Lift anything with the operative arm
- Remove the dressing/splint

Wound Care

Unless otherwise noted, your surgical site was closed with all-absorbable sutures under the skin, with steri-strips over top to seal the incision. A large, sterile soft dressing and splint was placed in the operating room.

- Do not remove the splint/dressing

Some drainage is normal for the first few days postoperatively.

- Excessive drainage that does not slow down or saturates the splint after a few days is worrisome. Please call the office with any questions or concerns.

Some redness around the incision is also normal in the first week postoperatively.

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- If the wound becomes progressively more red, swollen, or painful after several days, please call the office.

Medications

Unless otherwise noted, you will be given prescriptions for the following medications:
Aspirin 81 mg daily (4 weeks total)

- Helps prevent blood clots postoperatively

Oxycodone/acetaminophen (Percocet) 5 mg every 4 hours as needed (1 week total)

- Strong pain medication that can cause addiction
- Indiana law only allows prescription of 1 weeks' worth of narcotics
- Only use this as a last resort
- May cause nausea, constipation, drowsiness, altered mentation

Docusate (Colace) 100 mg twice daily (2 weeks total)

- This helps prevent constipation associated with oxycodone

Ondansetron (Zofran) 4 mg dissolved on tongue every 6 hours as needed for nausea

- For postoperative nausea

Showering

You may shower on postoperative day 3

- Leave the splint in place. Do NOT get the splint wet.
- You need to figure out a way to keep the splint/operative arm dry. Sponge baths work well. A sealed garbage bag around the arm works, but often can leak into the dressing. Be careful if using this technique.

Do NOT soak or submerge under water (bath tub, hot tub, pool).

- Until wound is completely healed (usually around 6 weeks)

Driving

You may return to driving if:

- You are completely off narcotic pain medications
- Strength and reflexes are back to normal
- Typically no earlier than 2 weeks postoperatively

Follow-up

Dr. Baessler will see you back in the office 2 weeks postoperatively for a wound check.