

Discharge Instructions for Shoulder Arthroscopy



You had a shoulder arthroscopy. This is a surgical procedure that helps your doctor diagnose and treat shoulder problems. These include instability, arthritis, and rotator cuff problems. Below are instructions to help you care for your shoulder when you are at home.

What to expect

After surgery, your joint may be swollen, painful, and stiff. The joint will heal with time. But, recovery times vary depending on what was done. For example, with a shaved rotator cuff, you may be told to move your arm soon after surgery to prevent stiffness. But if the rotator cuff is repaired or treatment is for instability or arthritis, your healthcare provider may want you to limit movement of your arm for a period of time. Follow your healthcare provider's instructions about arm movement.

Activity

- Don't drive until your healthcare provider says it's OK. And never drive while taking opioid pain medicine.
- Ask your healthcare provider when it's safe to do pendulum exercises. Your healthcare provider may advise a different number of repetitions than listed below. Follow your provider's instructions. Below are the steps for the pendulum exercise.

Pendulum exercise

- To do this exercise, you can sit or stand.
- Bend forward at the waist and place your healthy arm on a table or the back of a chair for support. Relax your affected arm and let it hang straight down.
- Don't actively move your arm with your shoulder muscles during this process. Instead, allow your arm to sway gently.
- Rock your body in a circular pattern to move your affected arm in a circle. First do 10 circles in one direction. Then do 10 circles in the other direction.
- Repeat the pendulum exercise 3 times a day.
- Ask your healthcare provider when to increase the amount of pendulum exercises.
- Bend your wrist and wiggle your fingers often to help blood flow.

Incision care

- Check your incision daily for redness, tenderness, or drainage.
- Ask your healthcare provider when you can begin showering. You may be instructed to wait 1 to 3 days after your surgery. Then shower as needed. Carefully wash your incision with soap and water. Gently pat it dry. Don't rub the incision, or apply creams or lotions to it.
- Don't soak in a bathtub, hot tub, or pool until your healthcare provider says it's OK.

Other home care

- Take your temperature daily for 7 days after your surgery. Report a fever above 100.4° F (38° C) to your healthcare provider. Fever may be a sign of infection.

- Wear your sling or immobilizer as directed by your healthcare provider.
- Use pain medicine, as needed and as directed. Don't wait until the pain is severe to start using the medicine.
- Use an ice pack or a bag of frozen peas—or something similar—wrapped in a thin towel on your shoulder to reduce swelling for the first 48 hours after surgery. Leave the ice pack on for 20 minutes; then take it off for 20 minutes. Repeat as needed.

Follow-up

Make a follow-up appointment as directed by your healthcare provider.

When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of the following:

- Increasing shoulder pain or pain not relieved by medicine
- Pain or swelling in the arm on the side of your surgery
- Numbness, tingling, or blue-gray color of your arm or fingers on the side of your surgery
- Drainage or oozing, excessive bleeding, redness, or warmth at the incision
- Fever of 100.4° F (38° C) or higher, or as directed by your healthcare provider
- Shaking chills
- Nausea or vomiting

Call 911

Call 911 right away if you have any of the following:

- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath

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