

Hand and Upper Extremity Post Operative Instructions

Following surgery, a post-operative appointment will be scheduled 10 days after surgery. Most frequently asked questions are answered below.

If you have any other questions do not hesitate to call Dr. Cogar's office, 405.419.5663 or 405.419.5665 from 8am to 5pm or 405.703.0222 after hours.

SWELLING:

- Swelling is expected following surgery. Reducing swelling helps speed recovery and will decrease pain.
- Elevation is the best remedy to swelling. Keep your hand elevated above the level of your heart for 3-5 days. While sitting in a chair or lying in bed, place your arm on pillows raised above your heart, with your finger-tips pointing towards the ceiling.
- While walking around, keep your hand elevated on your opposite shoulder. You may discontinue elevation when lowering the hand no longer causes it to throb. This typically happens after 72 hours.
- Gentle hand movement is encouraged as your bandage allows, trying to open and close your hand helps eliminate swelling.

WOUND CARE:

- The postoperative dressing, splint, or cast is a very important part of your treatment. The dressing should be left intact until your post operative visit, unless specified in detailed postoperative instructions.
- Frequently splints and casts will feel too tight, and you are welcome to loosen the outer compression (ace bandage) wrap, but please do not remove the entire dressing or adjust the plaster of any splint.
- Place a large plastic bag over your dressing/splint when you shower or bathe to prevent it from getting wet. Place two rubber bands above the dressing/splint to keep the bag in place and to avoid leaking.

ACTIVITIES:

- In general, care should be taken within the first several days following surgery to limit any strenuous activity. Elevations of heart rate and blood pressure can increase swelling and discomfort.

MEDICATIONS:

- Pain medication is frequently prescribed, and specific details regarding these medications can be addressed by your pharmacist.
- In addition to prescribed pain medication, over-the-counter anti-inflammatories (Advil, Motrin, Aleve) can be taken every 4-6 hours as needed.
- Pain medications can sometimes cause nausea, constipation, and itching. These are frequent “side effects” but rarely constitute a true allergy. Any new rash, difficulty with breathing, or swelling of the lips and face may indicate a serious allergic reaction, and you should alert your doctor.