

RALEIGH HAND TO SHOULDER CENTER

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Post-Operative Hand, Wrist, Elbow Surgery Instructions

1. Please keep your hand elevated above your heart for at least _____ days to reduce swelling. Keep a pillow under the hand when sleeping. Prolonged use of an arm sling is not recommended as it holds the hand below the heart.
2. Keep the surgical bandage dry. Cover the bandage with a plastic bag secured with tape or a rubber band while showering.
3. If the fingers are not immobilized by the bandages, you should gently make a fist and straighten the fingers several times per day to decrease stiffness. However, if the fingers are immobilized by a plaster splint, you should rest the hand and avoid movement of the fingers.
4. Call the office if you have severe pain, severe swelling, bleeding, vomiting, fever greater than 101 ° F, wound drainage, or concerns for infection. Some amount of pain, swelling, and bruising is normal after surgery.
5. Call the office if your fingers appear to lose blood flow circulation. Numbing medicine is often used which can cause numbness in the hand and arm for 24 hours after surgery.
6. If the bandage feels too tight, it may be gently loosened. If this does not help, please notify us. Take care not to move the plaster splint, if one is included in the bandage.
7. If you can take NSAIDs, alternate the pain medication with ibuprofen or naproxen to reduce pain. Wean off the opioid medication as soon as possible. Plan ahead to avoid running out of meds at night and on weekends as these will not be refilled after regular office hours.
8. Do not smoke or chew tobacco. Nicotine can reduce blood flow to the hand and delay healing.
9. Hand activity restrictions:
 - Do not bear weight through the hand or wrist
 - You may resume light hand activities within your pain tolerance, such as using a phone, gentle typing, and light household activities. No heavy hand use until advised.
10. Important instructions regarding your post-op bandage:
 - Do not remove the bandage until follow-up appointment.
 - Please remove your bandage _____ days after surgery. You may gently clean the area with soap and water, but avoid submerging the incision under water. Then dry the area and cover the incision with dry sterile gauze or a Band-Aid. This should be repeated once daily. Do not apply topical ointments such as Neosporin.