

Ronak M. Patel, MD

Elbow Fracture Surgery Post-Operative Instructions

Please bring all post-operative DME to the surgical facility the day of surgery (this includes all crutches, braces, slings, polar care machines, etc.)

Diet

- You may resume your regular diet. However, start slow with clear liquids and gradually work your way back to your normal diet. This will help prevent nausea and vomiting.

Wound Care

- Leave your splint on after surgery. This will be taken off on your first visit with Dr. Patel.
- Do not put any lotions or antibiotic ointments over the incisions until they are completely closed.
- It is ok to shower or sponge bathe 72 hours after surgery but you must keep your arm clean and dry. This usually entails keeping your arm outside the shower, using saran wrap or a large plastic bag to protect your wounds. At your first clinic visit Dr. Patel will tell you when you can shower normally.
- Do not submerge your surgical arm or soak in a hot tub, swimming pool, or bath for 4 weeks.
- Any sutures will be removed at your first post-op visit.

DVT Prevention

- Please perform ankle pumps as this will help prevent blood clots.
- **Sometimes we have to prescribe a blood thinner to help prevent blood clots. Given your medical history, surgery and activity level:**
 - **You are recommended to take one 325mg Aspirin daily by mouth for 4 weeks after surgery. Do not take Aspirin at the same time as NSAID medications.**
 - **STOP THE ASPIRIN:** If you have any stomach irritation, bleeding in your stool or you start vomiting blood. Contact Dr. Patel's office.
 - **You do not need to take any additional medications**
 - **Other:** _____
- If you are traveling after surgery, please let us know – we advise you to wait at least 4 weeks between travel and surgery. General tips for preventing blood clots when traveling after surgery:
 1. Get up on the plane to crutch/walk every hour or if driving stop every 1-2 hours to get up and walk
 2. Stay hydrated. Avoid alcohol and caffeine.
 3. Wear your leg stockings
 4. Take 325mg of Aspirin (unless allergic or have stomach or kidney problems) the day before travel, the day of travel and the day after travel

5. Do your exercises during travel especially ankle pumps
6. If you experience swelling in your calf or pain please call our office immediately or go to your local ED for evaluation

Post-operative Activity and Weight Bearing

- Use your sling and do not put weight on your arm. You will be non-weight bearing for 6-8 weeks on the surgical arm.
- You should do wrist exercises. Do this at least three times a day. It is okay to come out of the sling for this.

Cold Therapy

- Ice should be used to help reduce pain and swelling. An ice therapy unit is optional. Use it as often as possible the first 3 days after surgery, alternating 20 minutes on with 20 minutes off during the day. It can be used **continuously at night**. After that, you should apply ice at least 3 to 5 times a day for 20 minutes each session until pain and swelling have resolved.
- When icing after your surgical dressing has been removed at your post op visit, do not put ice directly over healing skin. Use of a thin cloth barrier between the skin and ice is recommended.
- Usage of an ice therapy device is at your own risk. Please make sure to read all instructions prior to purchasing one or using one. If you would like to purchase one you may do so online at Amazon.com and search “Cryotherapy”.

Pain Medication

- Take your pain medication as prescribed. This usually means 1 tablet every 4 hours for mild pain or 2 tablets every 4-6 hours for severe pain. You may want to take it regularly for the first 48 hours after surgery. Do not take any additional Tylenol. Do not take anti-inflammatories (NSAIDS, such as Ibuprofen, Naproxen, etc) until directed by Dr. Patel as these may impair bone healing.
- The pain medication may also cause constipation if you take it regularly, so take the prescribed stool softener as needed. Over the counter treatments include: stool softener, fiber bar, Metamucil or prune juice to prevent constipation.
- No driving while taking any narcotic pain medication.
- The pain medication may cause some nausea so take it with some food.

Effective October 6, 2014, federal regulation prevents the ability to call or fax post-operative pain medications to pharmacies (including refills). Every prescription must be an original and presented in person; please keep this in mind when requesting additional medications.

Bone Health

- While fractures can happen for a variety of reasons, sub-optimal bone health can be a risk factor. Taking Vitamin D and Calcium during the duration of your treatment may promote fracture healing. The following are suggested doses and are available over-the-counter: 1000mg Vitamin D by mouth daily and 1000mg Calcium by mouth daily.

- You should schedule an appointment with your primary care doctor and ask about checking your blood Vitamin D levels as well as possible Bone Density testing (DEXA scan).

Notify the Office if you Experience the Following

- Flu-like symptoms, nausea/vomiting, temperature of 101.5 degrees or higher, severe chills; foul odor, redness, or increased tenderness or drainage from the incision. These are signs of a possible infection. You may need to report to an Emergency Room.
- Progressively worsening pain unresponsive to pain medication, blue toes, and persistent numbness and tingling in your toes may indicate Compartment Syndrome. Loosen any dressing, elevate the extremity and call the office if during normal business hours or go to the nearest emergency room.
- Hot tender area or unusually large amounts of swelling in either calf or other area of the shoulder; chest pain, shortness of breath or coughing up blood. These are signs of a possible blood clot and you may need to report to an Emergency Room or call an ambulance.
- **For urgent problems** that occur during office hours (office hours, Monday -- Friday, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm), call Dr. Patel's office directly (630) 920-2350 or report to an emergency room. After hours, call (630) 920-2350 or report to an emergency room.

Follow-up

- If you do not have a postoperative appointment set-up already, please call the office to schedule an appointment for 14-21 days after surgery at (630) 920-2350.