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(1961-2012)

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**POST OPERATIVE PATIENT INFORMATION**  
**ARTHROSCOPIC ROTATOR CUFF REPAIR**

**PROCEDURE**

Your operation will be done through the arthroscope, a small telescope. Dr. Higgins will make 2 or 3 holes and look inside your shoulder. Dr. Higgins will repair the torn tendon.

**PAIN**

Dr. Higgins has a very particular routine to help make you comfortable (not necessarily pain free) after surgery. This includes prescription medicine, over the counter medication and ice. You will be given prescriptions for medication that will help control pain, nausea, inflammation and infection. You will also be asked to take over the counter medication for pain control. Medication should be taken as directed on the calendar that will be given to you at your preoperative appointment. The Cold Therapy Unit, alternative system, or ice bags should be worn continuously the first day and through the night for the first few weeks. This will help reduce pain and swelling. It is important to take the ice off and move your shoulder starting the second day after surgery. Some patients may go home with a pain control infusion pump. This is a small catheter placed inside the joint attached to a syringe filled with an anesthetic or numbing medicine. You do not need to push buttons or manipulate this device in any way. It will automatically deliver the appropriate dose of medication over the 2-3 days following surgery. Either you or the physical therapist may remove the catheter when the syringe is empty.

**BANDAGE**

Steri-strips, Band-Aids and a bulky soft bandage have been placed on your shoulder. They will soak up any blood or fluid that may seep from the incisions. If there is a lot of drainage on the bandage, you may change it. You may take the bandage, NOT the Band-Aids or Steri-strips, off the day after surgery or wait for your physical therapy appointment. If you decide to remove the bandage, be very careful not to accidentally remove the pain control catheter if there is medication remaining in the syringe. The feeling of water in your shoulder is normal. It is left over water from the surgery. Some of this water may leak from the incisions and your body will absorb the rest. Band-Aids may be changed as needed after the first three days but never use Neosporin on the incisions.

## **WOUNDS**

The 2 or 3 holes may be sore and some bruising may develop over the next several days. You may also notice some bruising down the arm. This will go away and no special care is needed. Steri-strips have been placed over the incisions and will fall off by themselves.

## **BATHING**

It is safe to bathe approximately 24 hours after surgery. Your skin will have a sticky, orange substance on it from the cleansing solution used during surgery. This can be removed by using rubbing alcohol. To bathe, you may leave the bulky dressing on or remove it, leaving the Band-Aids and/or the Steri-strips on. You DO NOT need to cover the incision or the Band-Aids with plastic wrap. The surgical area MAY get wet, wash with regular soap and water, and pat the Band-Aids dry. Please purchase a box of cloth or waterproof Band-Aids if the Band-Aids require replacement. Your physical therapist will direct you about changing Band-Aids.

## **RESTRICTION AND PRECAUTIONS**

There are a few restrictions you will need to follow immediately after the surgery and for the first 6 weeks while the tissues are healing. You should not lift greater than 5 lbs (about the weight of a gallon of milk) with the arm you had surgery, you should not reach behind your back like you do when tucking your shirt in or getting your wallet out of your back pocket with the arm you had surgery on, and you should not reach up and back like when getting your seatbelt, or as in a “high 5” type of motion with the arm you had surgery on. These motions can be detrimental to the repair. These restrictions are in effect for the first 6 weeks after your surgery. You will be able to go about your normal daily activities keeping these guidelines in mind. You will be able to bend and straighten your elbow for daily activities such as eating, grooming, brushing teeth, etc. as soon as you can without pain.

## **ACTIVITY**

A sling is necessary to support the arm the day of surgery. The sling may be removed the next day. You may drive when you feel you can drive safely. Dr. Higgins does not recommend driving the day after surgery but everyone should be driving within a week after surgery. Pain should be your guide with most activity; do not try to work through it. But remember the specific restrictions mentioned above even if there is no pain. Also, if you are going to be in a large public gathering, you should wear your sling. This is to protect you from being jostled, grabbed or patted on the shoulder by folks you may see. It is also a good idea to have your arm in a sling for the first week if you are going to be walking for greater than a few hours. In your home, you are encouraged to take your arm out of the sling and perform motion with it.

## **PHYSICAL THERAPY**

Exercises are extremely important following arthroscopic surgery to help you regain motion, strength and flexibility of your shoulder and arm. Dr. Higgins has developed a specific regimen of physical therapy for you after your surgery. It is just as important, if not more, than the surgery itself to your final outcome. Physical therapy is scheduled to start 1-3 days after your surgery and it is to continue for approximately 12 weeks post operatively. You are to schedule 3 visits per week for about the first 6 weeks and then you will need to schedule 2 visits a week for the next 4-6 weeks and you may get decreased to 1 visit per week as you get near discharge and completion of your rehab. The physical therapists will let you know when to decrease the frequency of your physical therapy visits as you progress through the rehabilitation. You will be given exercises to do at home starting at your first visit

and will be progressed as you continue through the rehabilitation. Your compliance with the home exercise program is essential to the desired outcome and successful results of your surgery. Your attendance at physical therapy is also essential to a successful outcome.

## **RESULTS**

Surgery done through the arthroscope is very similar to the surgery done inside your shoulder through a larger incision. Even though the holes are small, there has been an operation inside and around the shoulder joint. Complete healing may take several weeks or months.

## **PRECAUTIONS**

If you have a fever over 101, severe pain or redness in your shoulder, please call the office at 301-232-1050. If it is after hours, please call 240-401-0019. Swelling, some drainage and redness are normal.

## **FOLLOW UP**

Your appointment to see Dr. Higgins or Kristine has been made for about 1 week after your surgery. Please refer to your surgery instruction letter for the date and time. If you have misplaced your letter, please contact our office at 301-232-1050.