

# **POSTOPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS**

## **ELBOW MCL RECONSTRUCTIONS**

### **DIET**

- Begin with clear liquids and light foods (jellos, soups, etc.)
- Progress to your normal diet if you are not nauseated

### **WOUND CARE**

- Maintain your operative dressing, loosen bandage if swelling of the elbow, wrist, or hand occurs
- It is normal for the shoulder to bleed and swell following surgery – if blood soaks onto the bandage, do not become alarmed – reinforce with additional dressing
- To avoid infection, keep surgical incisions clean and dry – you may shower by placing a large garbage bag over your sling starting the day after surgery – NO immersion of operative arm (i.e. bath)

### **MEDICATIONS**

- Pain medication is injected into the wound and shoulder joint during surgery – this will wear off within 8-12 hours
- Most patients will require some narcotic pain medication for a short period of time – this can be taken as per directions on the bottle
- Common side effects of the pain medication are nausea, drowsiness, and constipation – to decrease the side effects, take medication with food – if constipation occurs, consider taking an over-the-counter laxative
- If you are having problems with nausea and vomiting, contact the office to possibly have your medication changed (312-243-4244 – ask for Dr. Cole’s nurse)
- Do not drive a car or operate machinery while taking the narcotic medication
- Ibuprofen 200-400mg (i.e. Advil) may be taken in between the narcotic pain medication to help smooth out the post-operative ‘peaks and valleys’, reduce overall amount of pain medication required, and increase the time intervals between narcotic pain medication usage

### **ACTIVITY**

- When sleeping or resting, inclined positions (i.e. reclining chair) and a pillow under the forearm for support may provide better comfort
- Do not engage in activities which increase pain/swelling (lifting or any repetitive above shoulder-level activities) over the first 7-10 days following surgery
- Avoid long periods of sitting (without arm supported) or long distance traveling for 2 weeks
- NO driving until instructed otherwise by physician
- May return to sedentary work ONLY or school 3-4 days after surgery, if pain is tolerable

### **IMMOBILIZER**

- Your immobilizer should be worn at all times except for hygiene and exercise

### **ICE THERAPY**

- Begin immediately after surgery
- Use icing machine continuously or ice packs (if machine not prescribed) every 2 hours for 20 minutes daily until your first post-operative visit – remember to keep arm supported while icing

### **EXERCISE**

- No elbow exercises or motion until after your first post-operative visit
- You may remove your sling for range of motion exercises of your shoulder, wrist, and hand
- Formal physical therapy (PT) will begin about 10 days post-operatively with a prescription provided at your first post-operative visit

## **EMERGENCIES\*\***

- Contact Dr. Cole or his nurse at 312-243-4244 if any of the following are present:
  - Painful swelling or numbness
  - Unrelenting pain
  - Fever (over 101° - it is normal to have a low grade fever for the first day or two following surgery) or chills
  - Redness around incisions
  - Color change in wrist or hand
  - Continuous drainage or bleeding from incision (a small amount of drainage is expected)
  - Difficulty breathing
  - Excessive nausea/vomiting

\*\*If you have an emergency after office hours or on the weekend, contact the same office number (312-243-4244) and you will be connected to our page service – they will contact Dr. Cole or one of his fellows if he is unavailable. Do NOT call the hospital or surgicenter.

\*\*If you have an emergency that requires immediate attention, proceed to the nearest emergency room.

## **FOLLOW-UP CARE/QUESTIONS**

- Kyle Pilz, PA-C, Natalie Podboy, PA-C or Kevin Shinsako, PA-C (Dr. Cole's Physician Assistants) will call you on your first day after surgery to address any questions or concerns. If you have not been contacted within 48 hours of surgery, please call Kyle, Natalie or Kevin directly at (312-432-2363).
- If you have additional questions that arise at any time, whether for Dr. Cole, Kyle, Natalie or Kevin, please send an e-mail to Kyle ([KPilz@rushortho.com](mailto:KPilz@rushortho.com)), Natalie ([NPodboy@rushortho.com](mailto:NPodboy@rushortho.com)) or Kevin ([Kevin.Shinsako@rushortho.com](mailto:Kevin.Shinsako@rushortho.com)) for the fastest reply. If e-mail is not an option please call Kyle, Natalie or Kevin directly at (312-432-2363).
- If you do not already have a postoperative appointment scheduled, please contact the office during normal office hours (312-243-4244) and ask for appointment scheduling.