

Gordon Groh MD, MBA Post Discharge Protocol

Ulnar Nerve (Cubital Tunnel) at Elbow

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Pain

- Over 90% of patients take narcotics for less than 5 days after surgery
- Take over the counter Tylenol 325 tablets
 - 2 tablets every 6 hours
- If prescribed Gabapentin—take every 8 hours as directed
- If prescribed an anti-inflammatory such as Celebrex—take daily as directed
- Take oxycodone as needed for pain—begin as block begins to wear off or prior to first night sleep

Dressing Change

- Leave initial dressing in place for five days—may remove and place Band-Aids.
 - Avoid any creams or ointments until the skin is healed

Bathing

- You may shower after the first dressing change five days after surgery—no tub bathing
- Do not get incision sites excessively wet

Sling

- Wear the sling until block wears off. May wear sling as needed after sensation returns.

Driving

- May contemplate driving if patient feels safe 2-3 days after surgery. Patient must be off all narcotic pain medications
- Patient must feel comfortable handling vehicle in emergency situations

Physical Therapy

- No therapy is indicated within the first two weeks as our initial emphasis is centered on wound healing. You may begin range of motion of the elbow as soon as the block has worn off. Over 95% of patients will not require either Physical Therapy or Occupational Therapy.

CHG/Pre-operative Wash

- All total shoulder patients will receive a CHG sponge and should wash with it the night prior to surgery

Constipation

- Take over the counter MiraLAX and Senna (over the counter) twice per day while using narcotic pain medications.
- Take Colace as directed (prescription) while taking narcotic pain medications.

Swelling & Edema management

- Some swelling/edema is normal in the forearm/hand after elbow surgery—although the amount can be variable.
- Making a fist and squeezing a ball repeatedly during the day improves blood return and decreases swelling

Bruising/Discoloration/Numbness in arm after Surgery

- Normal after surgery and blood thinners including aspirin/anti-inflammatory medications may increase bruising
- Some patients may experience numbness along the lateral aspect of the forearm after surgery due to even gentle retraction of the lateral antebrachial cutaneous nerve. If you have numbness, this will recede over a few weeks

Staple/Suture Removal

- Staples may be removed at the 14 days recheck if the wound appears to be healing with minimal swelling. Steri-strips are applied after staple removal and should stay in place until approximately 17 days after surgery.

Anti-Coagulation

- Aspirin 325 mg per day or Xarelto/Coumadin for higher risk patients—typical duration four weeks—if indicated

Dental Precautions

- Delay elective dental procedures after surgery for 6 weeks
- Antibiotics are typically not indicated

Length of Time for Improvement in Sensation/Strength

- Inversely related to the amount of nerve compression and severity
 - Severe cases take longer to improve and may not resolve completely
- May see improvement in symptoms for up to 18 months after surgery.