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Elbow and Hand Surgery – Postoperative Instructions

Dressing and Showering: You may remove bandage after **3 days**. Keep incision clean and dry, covered with a Band-Aid, and **DO NOT** use Neosporin or other ointments. To shower, cover incision with a water proof Band-Aid, glove, etc. Make sure to keep your incision dry. Change to a regular Band-Aid after showering, as to not trap moisture on the incision. **Do not soak the operative elbow or hand (no baths, hot-tubs, or pools)** for 4 weeks or until allowed by Dr. Palsis to avoid risk of infection.

Ice Therapy and Elevation: Elevate and apply ice (in bag) to extremity for **15 minutes** out of every hour while awake. You may continue this for **24-48 hours**. Care must be taken with icing to avoid frostbite to the skin. Your elbow/hand will be numb for **6-12 hours** after surgery due to local anesthetic. A tingling sensation, some swelling and some bruising is all normal. To reduce swelling, keep fingers moving as much as possible. If excessive swelling occurs loosen or remove bandage as needed.

Activity: Rest when you feel tired. Getting enough sleep will help you recover. For up to two weeks after surgery, avoid lifting things heavier than a pound or two. This includes doing repeated arm or hand movements, such as typing or using a computer mouse, washing windows, vacuuming, or chopping food. Do not use power tools, and avoid activities that cause vibration. You may begin heavier tasks about 4 weeks after surgery. These include vacuuming, mowing the lawn, and gardening.

Medications:

- **Pain Control:** Many patients will require some narcotic pain medication (e.g., Vicodin, Norco, Percocet, or other codeine-derivative) for 1-3 days after surgery – please take as instructed. It is important not to drink alcohol or drive while taking narcotic medication. If your pain is minimal, you may discontinue the use of narcotics. Ibuprofen (Advil) 400-800 mg can be taken as needed in between doses of narcotic pain medication for additional pain control.
- **Nausea:** The anesthetic drugs used during your surgery may cause nausea for the first 24 hours. Some patient will require anti-nausea medication (e.g., Zofran, Phenergan) for 1-3 days after surgery—please take as instructed. If nausea and vomiting become severe, or if you show signs of dehydration (lack of urination), please call Dr. Palsis’s office.
- **Constipation:** The use of narcotics can lead to constipation. Adequate hydration and over-the-counter stool softeners (e.g., docusate) can minimize constipation problems.
- **Normal Medications:** Resume the day after surgery unless otherwise instructed.

Diet: Following surgery, begin with clear liquids and light foods. You can progress to your normal diet if not nauseated.

Postoperative Appointment: Dr. Palsis will need to reexamine you 7-10 days after your procedure. Please call the office at (321) 361-5550 to schedule a follow-up appointment if not already scheduled.

Driving: No driving for 24 hours after surgery or while taking narcotic pain medication.

Work/School: May return to sedentary work or school 3-4 days after surgery if pain is tolerable.

Phone Numbers and Other Helpful Information:

- A low-grade fever (up to 100.5 degrees) is not uncommon in the first 48 hours. Please call Dr. Palsis's office with any temperature over 101.3 degrees.
- Please call Dr. Palsis's office if you have severe pain that your pain medication does not relieve, persistent numbness of the hand, fever over 101.3 degrees, redness/warmth around the incision(s), persistent drainage/bleeding from the incision(s), difficulty breathing, chest pain, excessive nausea/vomiting, or if you experience redness or swelling in your thigh or calf.
- If unexpected problems occur and you need to speak to someone, please call the doctor. If calling after office hours or on the weekend, call (321) 361-5550.
- If you have an emergency that requires immediate attention, proceed to the nearest emergency room.