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ELBOW Arthroscopy DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS

DR. Grant Garcia

PAIN MANAGEMENT

- **INTERSCALENE NERVE BLOCK** - A combination of local anesthetics are used to numb your shoulder and arm so your brain will not receive any pain signals during and immediately after surgery. The length of effect varies from person to person, but the block usually provides 8-12 hours of pain relief. You will notice a gradual increase in pain as this begins to wear off at which time you can increase the frequency of the oral pain medications as needed.
- **ORAL PAIN MEDICATIONS**
Some pain, swelling, and bruising is expected after surgery. It is usually most severe for the first 2-3 days. The following strategies are especially important during this time. Try to anticipate an increase in pain when the nerve block wears off, usually within 12-24 hours.
- **Medication** — You may have received a prescription for narcotic and/ or anti-inflammatory medication. Please take them as instructed. The medication is most helpful if taken 30-45 minutes prior to any planned activity or exercise. Try to anticipate a return of pain after the nerve block has worn off by taking medication before going to bed.
 - If needed, you can take an over-the-counter anti-inflammatory in addition to your pain medication. *Do not take these if you are on blood thinners or have a history of ulcers.*
 - Ibuprofen (Advil/Motrin) – Maximum of 800 mg every 8 hours
 - Naproxen (Aleve) – 1-2 tablets every 8-12 hours
 - If needed, you can take an over-the-counter anti-inflammatory in addition to your pain medication. *Do not take these if you are on blood thinners or have a history of ulcers.*
 - Ibuprofen (Advil/Motrin) – Maximum of 800 mg every 8 hours
 - Naproxen (Aleve) – 1-2 tablets every 8-12 hours

SIDE EFFECTS OF THESE MEDICATIONS INCLUDE DROWSINESS AND CONSTIPATION. **YOU SHOULD NOT DRIVE OR DRINK ALCOHOL WHILE TAKING THESE PAIN MEDICATIONS.**

- **OTHER MEDICATIONS**
 - Scopolamine Patch
 - This is a patch placed on the skin behind your ear pre-operatively to help prevent nausea and vomiting. You can remove the patch tomorrow morning unless you are still nauseated, in which case you may leave it on for up to 3 days. Remove immediately if you begin experiencing eye pain, dizziness, or a rapid pulse.
 - Stool Softeners
 - Post-operative constipation can result due a combination of inactivity, anesthesia, and pain medication. To help prevent this, you should increase your water and fiber intake. Physical activity such as walking will also help stimulate the bowel. If you do experience constipation, you may try taking a stool softener such as Metamucil powder or Senokot.

ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS

- **SLING:** as needed for pain
 - You will need to wear the sling at all times (during the day and at night). You may remove it to *shower, get dressed,* and do your *exercises/physical therapy.* When the sling is off you may let your arm hang straight down at the side.

- You can adjust the straps on the sling as needed for comfort. Be sure that your arm is well-supported and your forearm is parallel to the floor.
- **We recommend that you DO NOT drive during the period of time your arm is in the sling**
- **ICE MACHINE**
 - Recommend using **1 hour on, 1 hour off for the first 2 days after surgery** *while awake*
 - Do not place pad directly on skin – make sure there is a barrier such as a t-shirt or towel
 - After the first 2 days you may use the ice machine as needed for comfort
 - If you did not receive the ice machine, you may use ice packs on the surgical area 20-30 minutes every 1-2 hours

WOUND CARE & BATHING

- **BANDAGE**
 - You have a large, bulky bandage on your elbow that you may remove **2 days** after your surgery. Simply peel off all of the tape and underlying gauze.
 - After the dressing is removed, you will see that the incisions are reinforced with white adhesive bandages called Steri-Strips – leave these on until your sutures are removed.
 - Cover the incisions with a new bandage once daily – Band-Aids or gauze and tape will work just fine.
 - Keep the incisions clean and dry – do not put any alcohol, lotion, or ointment on the incisions.
- **BATHING**
 - You can shower once the initial dressing is removed (2 days post-op). However, the incisions need to stay dry and covered and in the shower until the sutures are removed at 7-14 days post-op. Waterproof bandages work very well for this.
 - Do not submerge the incisions in a bath, pool, or hot tub until the sutures are removed **and** the wound is healed.
- **SUTURE REMOVAL**
 - Stitches will need to be removed in **7-14 days**. Please contact our office to make an appointment for this if you have not already done so.
 - 206-633-8100
 - We prefer that you return to our office to have your sutures removed. If you live a great distance away and are unable to do so, you may have a local physician remove your sutures.
 - If you choose to do this:
 - **You must first contact that physician to confirm that they are willing and able to do so.**
- Keep an eye on your incisions for **signs of infection**:
 - Excessive drainage that is soaking through your dressing, especially if it is pus-like
 - Redness that is spreading out from the edges of your incision
 - Fever or increased warmth around the surgical area

CONTACTING OUR OFFICE

EMERGENCIES**

*Contact Dr. Garcia at 206-633-8100 if any of the following are present:

- Painful swelling or numbness (note that some swelling and numbness is normal)
- 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 foot or ankle
- Continuous drainage or bleeding from incision (a small amount of drainage is expected)
- Difficulty breathing
- Excessive nausea/vomiting
- Calf pain

**If you have an emergency after office hours or on the weekend, contact the same office number (206-633-8100) and you will be connected to our page service – this will contact Dr. Garcia or one of his physician assistants. 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

*If you do not already have a post-operative appointment scheduled, please contact the office immediately at 206-633-8100 to speak our Administrative Assistant or visit our website

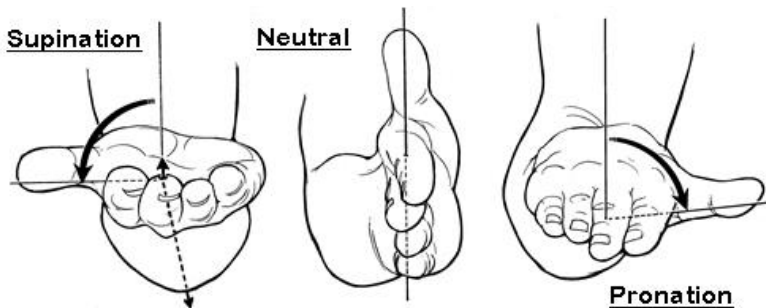
www.grantgarciamd.com

*Typically, post-operative appointments are made for 10-14 days following the date of surgery

*If you have any further questions, contact the office directly.

PHYSICAL THERAPY

- **Your physical therapy order, which you should hand-carry to your first visit, is attached to the back of this packet.**
 - Physical therapy can be done at the facility of your choice.
- You may begin the home exercises listed below **tomorrow**. You can remove your sling to perform these exercises.
 - **SUPINATION AND PRONATION** (10-15 repetitions per set | 2 sets | 3 times daily)
 - With elbow at your side, alternate turning your palm upward (supination) and downward (pronation).



- **FLEXION AND EXTENSION** (10-15 repetitions per set | 2 sets | 3 times daily)
 - Remove sling and allow arm to rest at your side (you may perform this sitting or standing). Allow your arm to straighten at the side, then gently bend elbow up. Position forearm with thumb facing up.



- **HAND AND WRIST EXERCISES** (10-15 repetitions per set | 2 sets | 3 times daily)
 - With your arm comfortably supported, gently bend wrist back and forth.
 - Curl the fingers into the palm to make a loose fist and then straighten them out.

