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POSTOPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS
ELBOW – Lateral Collateral Repair / Reconstruction

**PLEASE READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS COMPLETELY AND ASK FOR
CLARIFICATION IF NECESSARY - DIRECT QUESTIONS TO YOUR NURSE
BEFORE LEAVING**

DIET

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

WOUND CARE

- It is normal for the incision to bleed and swell following surgery – if blood soaks through the dressing, simply reinforce with additional gauze dressing for the remainder of day and check again.
The post-op wrap and dressing should stay on the elbow until the first post-operative visit in clinic.

MEDICATIONS

- Pain medication is injected into the wound during surgery – this will wear off within 8-12 hours. It is recommended to begin the prescription pain medication provided to you upon arriving home, and continue as frequently as every 4 hours for the first 1-2 days after surgery.
- If you are having problems with nausea and vomiting, contact the office to possibly have your pain medication changed or something additional prescribed for nausea.
- Common side effects of the pain medication include nausea, drowsiness, and constipation. To minimize risk of side effects, take medication with food - if constipation occurs, consider taking an over-the-counter stool softener such as Dulcolax or Colace.
- Do not drive a car or operate machinery while taking the narcotic medication.
- As long as you have no personal history of adverse response to anti-inflammatories, use an over-the counter anti-inflammatory such as Ibuprofen (i.e. Advil/Motrin) 600-800 mg as frequently as every 8 hours with food to help swelling and pain in addition to the prescribed pain medication.

ICE THERAPY

- Due to the dressing and splint, it will be difficult to apply ice to the surgical site on the elbow. A medium to large ice pack can be placed over the 'open' region of the elbow for 30 mins at a time.
- When using "real" ice, avoid direct skin contact > 20 mins to prevent damage / frostbite of skin. In either case, check any exposed skin frequently for excessive redness, blistering or other signs of frostbite.

ACTIVITY

- Remain in sling and brace at all times other than personal hygiene and wardrobe changes
- Okay to remove sling 3x daily for movement of wrist, hand, fingers beginning first post-operative day if instructed by Dr. Garcia
- Do not engage in activities which increase arm pain over the first 7-10 days following surgery.
- NO driving until off narcotic pain medication.
- Okay to return to work when ready and able. Please notify office if written clearance is needed.

EXERCISE/PT

- Exercises specific to your procedure will be given to you by Dr. Garcia's team in some cases.
- Formal physical therapy (PT) will begin after your first post-operative visit if necessary.

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.