



# *Post Operative Instructions: Distal Radius ORIF*

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## **ACTIVITY**

- You **may not bear weight** on the operated arm (lean on arm, push off a surface, carry objects) until cleared by Dr. Gilmer.
  - You should move (straighten and bend) your fingers at least 10 times per day within your comfort zone to decrease swelling and prevent stiffness.
  - You may move your shoulder (raise it overhead) and elbow (bend and straighten) within your comfort zone to decrease swelling and prevent stiffness.
  - You may be able to do some typing or writing right after surgery. But swelling or stiffness may make it hard to do these things for 3 to 4 weeks after surgery.
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## **SPLINT**

- Keep the splint on at all time, we will remove this during your visit to the clinic.
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## **DRESSING & INCISIONS**

- A small amount of red-tinged drainage on the dressing during the first 2 days is normal.
  - Keep the dressing clean and dry; protect it while bathing or showering.
  - Do not apply Bacitracin or other ointments.
  - Avoid soaking in pools, lakes, hot tubs, or the ocean until sutures are removed and the incision is fully healed.
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## **PAIN & INFLAMMATION**

### Ice

- Apply ice wrapped in a dry towel 20 minutes at a time, several times per day for the first week, then as needed.

**Swelling-** You may notice that your fingers will get swollen if your arm is hanging by your side for long periods of time, keep your arm **elevated above your heart** as much as possible for the first 2 to 3 days.

### Pain Medications

- Take your prescribed medications as directed.

#### Tylenol (Acetaminophen)

- First-line for pain.
- Take 1000 mg every 6–8 hours.
- Do not exceed 1000 mg per dose or 4000 mg per day (limit to 3000 mg/day if you have liver issues).
- Do not drink alcohol while taking Tylenol.

#### Oxycodone

- For moderate to severe breakthrough pain only.
- Use sparingly and wean off as soon as possible.

#### Common side effects include:

- Nausea: Take with food.

- Drowsiness: Do not drive or operate machinery.
- Itching: Benadryl may help.
- Constipation:
  - Use stool softeners (e.g., Senna-Docusate) or OTC options (Mineral Oil, Milk of Magnesia, etc).
  - Avoid bananas, rice, apples, toast, and yogurt (may worsen constipation).
  - Light walking helps stimulate bowel function.

Refills:

- If you think you will need a refill, you must request it during regular weekday office hours.

## **EMERGENCIES**

You must have someone stay with you during the first 48 hours after surgery.

Call the clinic or the on-call orthopedist if:

- Drainage soaks the dressing, increases, smells foul, or if incisions become red, warm, or very painful.
  - You develop a fever  $>101.5^{\circ}\text{F}$  or chills.
  - You experience leg or calf pain, swelling, or difficulty breathing.
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## **FOLLOW-UP CARE**

- Schedule a follow-up appointment at ~2 weeks postoperatively for a wound check, suture removal, and review of your surgery (if not already scheduled).
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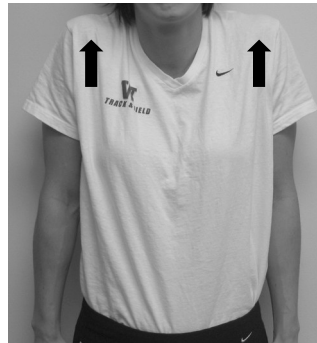
## EXERCISES

### Grip strengthening:

With the arm in the sling, grip a rubber ball, old tennis ball, or beanbag. Hold for 5 seconds and release.

#### •Shoulder Shrugs:

1. Keep your arm close to your body.
2. Shrug your shoulders upwards and hold for 5 seconds.
3. Slowly lower your shoulders
4. Repeat



#### •Shoulder Rows:

1. Keep your arm close to your body.
2. Pull your shoulders forward by rounding your back. Hold for 5 seconds.
3. Slowly unround your back and stand normally.
4. Pull your shoulders back by trying to “pinch” your shoulder blades together. Hold for 5 seconds.
5. Repeat

