



Post Operative Instructions: Elbow Fracture ORIF

ACTIVITY

- You **may not bear weight** on the operated arm (lean on the arm, push off a surface, carry objects greater than 5 pounds) until permitted by Dr. Gilmer.
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SPLINT & SLING

- Keep the splint on at all times. We will remove this during your visit to the clinic.
 - You may remove the sling as much as you would like; it is just for your comfort.
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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

Once your pain is controlled and you feel comfortable, you may perform the following exercises (**10 reps each, three times daily**). It will help you to take your pain medication 20 to 30 minutes prior to the exercises:

1. **Grip strengthening:** With the arm in the sling, grip a rubber ball, old tennis ball, or beanbag. Hold for 5 seconds and release.
2. **Shoulder shrugs:** Shrug your shoulders up towards your ears and hold for 10 seconds.
3. **Pendulum:** Lean forward and hang your arm down towards the floor. Trace small letters of the alphabet with your finger on the floor. The arm movements must be **PASSIVE!** (Do not use your muscles to lift/move the arm). Make the letters bigger daily by a small amount. (Shoot for 45 degrees of forward motion and 45 degrees of sideways motion **PASSIVELY**).