

# Recovering After Total Shoulder Replacement

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Now that your surgery is over, it's time to start healing! There is a lot to know and understand, but it is rather simple. Don't make it harder than you need to. Give your shoulder a chance to heal.

## **Comfort and medications after Surgery**

Many of you will have had a nerve block for the surgery. Your anesthesiologist is in charge of this and performs the blocks. When it works as it should, you may have no pain at all for the first 24 hours. You also may not be able to feel your fingers. Don't worry – the block will wear off. Call me if the block lasts more than two days. I've seen them last three days.

**Ibuprofen:** This medicine helps with pain and inflammation. It works in your shoulder. I typically will suggest 200-400mg three times a day unless it bothers your stomach or if there is any chance your kidneys aren't functioning well. This will help reduce swelling, inflammation and pain. Don't take higher doses as it may slow healing.

**Vicodin / Percocet:** A strong narcotic with added acetaminophen and

**Oxycodone:** A strong narcotic without acetaminophen.

These tell your brain you don't have pain. You are not required to take these but may use them as needed. These do have side effects like brain fog, nausea, constipation, and can be addictive. If nothing is working, please call. You will not get addicted to a medication if taken for the right reasons.

**Sleep sitting reclined** Because of the inflammation of surgery, which is actually healing, sleeping in a reclining position is more comfortable for the first couple of weeks. It's hard and painful to lay flat, so just don't do it. A recliner chair may be your best bet. Wear the brace while sleeping. You may still sleep in bed whenever you want.

**Bruising** Bruising down your arm and around your chest is normal. This may show up days after surgery and change color and size. All of this is normal.

**Wear the brace** The sling with the bump (abduction sling) is important to keep the repair of the tissues and bone relaxed. The cushion does this. Some may be allowed to remove the bump early. Stay in your sling unless you are doing your exercises (see movement below) or letting your arm rest on pillows away from your body. You may sit on the couch away from pets and children out of your brace with pillows if you like. Just be careful.

**Don't use your arm!** This seems so simple, but I have seen a handful (too many) patients who don't follow instructions and try to use their arm too much after surgery. You may type on a computer keyboard, "drink a cup of coffee" or read a magazine, but beyond that you should not use it much at all for the first few weeks. Be patient. Your shoulder is an investment in your future!

### **Movement**

Some gentle movement is good for your shoulder and helps circulation and healing. Beginning the day after surgery, start with standing pendulum exercises. Let your arm hang down like a pendulum and move your body while relaxing your shoulder and making small circles. This is called passive motion. Do not actively move the shoulder. Flexing and extending your elbow and moving your wrist and hand with gripping exercises should be done as well. This helps with circulation and decreases swelling of the hand.

**DON'TS** No lifting of objects heavier than a coffee cup.

No excessive shoulder motion behind the back.

No excessive stretching or sudden movements (particularly upwards or outwards).

No supporting of body weight by hand on involved side.

Because we **fixed your biceps and subscapularis** you should pretend there is a wall preventing you from moving your forearm and hand in any outward motion (NO EXTERNAL ROTATION). Your biceps turns your wrist and hand from palm down to palm up. Do not open any jars, use screwdriver, open doors, etc until at least 6 weeks after surgery.

**Icing** Ice your shoulder for about 20 minutes on, then give it a break for another 20-30 minutes. You can do this throughout the day to help keep the swelling to a minimum. Never put ice directly on your skin – it can give you frostbite.

Better yet, the **ICE Machine** that you receive from the outpatient surgery center is the best thing you can use for your shoulder pain and swelling, and can also be purchased online for about \$250. If you'd really like, we can obtain an ICE + COMPRESSION unit for you. Just ask. You may also borrow one or rent one from a local supplier. If you use an ice machine, keep the temperature at 42 degrees or above. The newer units automatically adjust the temperature. Make sure you check with me before purchasing, as some do not control temperature and can be dangerous to the skin.

**Bruising and numbness** Bruising down your leg and around your shoulder and even eventually to down to your toes after time is normal. This may show up days after surgery and change color and size. **There will be a numb area from the shoulder incision.** Sensation usually returns after several months, but sometimes it stays numb. All of this is normal.

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**Dressing/SkinCare:** It is best to keep the clear honeycomb dressing on and clean and dry until follow-up in 12-16 days. Dressing should be kept on and make sure the incision site is kept clean and dry. If you see **wet red blood** through the dressing, call us and come in for new clean dressing. **DO NOT** put anything on the incision yourself. **Triple antibiotic ointment is BAD, Coban is BAD, and other things are not appropriate.**

If your dressing comes off early or gets dirty, come in to clinic and we will replace it. If it gets soaking wet, take it off immediately and contact us immediately.

We still like for you to wait several days before showering just in case the incision accidentally gets wet despite our efforts. (e.g., small hole in plastic). Additionally, your skin and shoulder are very much more susceptible to skin infections. Do not do any hiking, gardening or other risky behaviors without adequately protecting the skin for at least 3 months after surgery. **Any wet**

*blood or fluid collecting under the dressing more than just a few drops is BAD. Please call and come in to the office immediately if this occurs.*

**Showering** You may shower, as long as we have placed the honeycomb plastic covering, and you put something over that. Make sure you do not accidentally remove your very important honeycomb dressing. I recommend waiting at least 5-7 days before showering even with it covered. No hot tubs, spas, bathtubs, or time in the pool until the wounds are completely healed and OK'd by me.

**Physical therapy and Home Health** PT is a key part of the recovery plan. Be sure this is set up with my assistants. We will set this up close to your home or work with someone that I trust. Your therapy should never cause unbearable pain and if it seems therapy is pushing you too much please call me.

If you have general questions about the immediate recovery after your repair, you can contact me by calling the office and asking for my assistant. One of the physicians will be taking call over the weekends and at night. If you're not comfortable with their suggestions or for any pressing issues you may TEXT my Cell at 928 300-3653. Call/Text during normal waking hours for any concerns. If you feel you have an emergency in the middle of the night please go to the Emergency Room (very very rare)

You may also come in any time that I'm in the office to any issues or concerns. Please just call ahead so our office will be ready for you. 928 778-9250