



Orthopaedic Specialists  
of Central Arizona

## **DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS AFTER SHOULDER ARTHROSCOPY**

*Depending on the nature of your shoulder problem and the necessary surgical treatment, the post-operative instructions may vary from patient to patient.*

- Activity:** The affected arm will be in a sling following surgery. The sling provides for both rest and protection during the healing process. Please try to keep your arm in the sling at all times, except for dressing and bathing. Sponge baths are recommended for the first two days, using a washcloth to keep your armpit clean (this can usually be done with the arm kept in the sling by gently leaning forward and allowing the arm to fall away from your body).
- Dressings:** You should maintain the original surgical dressing for the first 48 hours after surgery. At that time, you may remove the surgical dressing. You will see Steri-strips (aka butterfly band aids) on the wounds- leave these in place. You may shower after 48 hours. After showering, cover the incisions with Band-Aids or a gauze dressing. DO NOT bathe, swim, or otherwise soak your shoulder until after your follow-up appointment. You may notice some redness about the incisions as they heal. If this redness increases or you notice any discharge from the wounds after the first several days, please call the office.
- Pain Control:** You will be given a prescription for pain medication (usually Vicodin, to be taken 1-2 tablets every 6 hrs.) after surgery. Use this as needed. This may be combined with Advil (3 tabs three times a day with food) or Aleve (2 tabs twice a day with food). Once the initial pain subsides, try to manage with just Extra-strength Tylenol, Advil, or Aleve. It is common to have swelling and discomfort for several days or even several weeks after surgery. Icing of the shoulder is extremely helpful to control both pain and swelling. Ice the operated shoulder for 20 minutes at least four times a day for the first seven days. After that, ice the shoulder if it is still swollen or you still have pain.
- Exercises:** Plan to avoid demanding activities and athletics for up to 6 weeks after surgery.
- Work:** Plan to take 1 – 2 weeks off from work following surgery. You may resume work once you are comfortable- this will obviously be influenced by the type of work that you do.
- Follow-up:** Your post-operative follow-up appointment will be scheduled prior to surgery (usually in 7-10 days).

*Each patient will respond and recover from surgery at their own pace. While it is informative and useful to "compare notes" with a friend, relative or colleague who has also undergone arthroscopic surgery, please do not place undue importance on keeping up with them. Remember that each patient's problem and surgery is unique. If you encounter specific problems please call the office as soon as possible.*



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### POST-OPERATIVE ICING INSTRUCTIONS

The use of ice, or cryotherapy, can relieve pain, swelling, inflammation or spasm. It is important that you are consistent with your icing program. You should continue a regular and consistent icing program as long you experience symptoms. Remember, ice is "your friend" after any orthopaedic injury or surgery.

In order to maximize the benefit of the ice treatments, you must ice the affected area at least four times a day. A good pattern is to ice in the morning, at noon, in the afternoon, and again in the evening. Icing an hour before bedtime is also helpful. In addition, ice following physical therapy, independent exercises, any prolonged activity or vigorous exercise.

There are many good ways to use ice. NEVER apply ice directly on your skin. In all cases, a pack should have a cloth between it and your skin. Apply the ice pack to the affected area for approximately 20 minutes. Be sure you do not apply ice for longer periods than indicated, nor fall asleep with ice on your skin.

**ICE PACKS:** Ice packs may be made with cubed, crushed, or shaved ice. Wrap the ice pack in a wash-cloth or towel and apply it to the affected area.

**VEGETABLE PACK:** Place loose frozen small vegetables (peas, corn, etc.) in a plastic bag and apply to the affected area on top of a wash-cloth. Refreeze after use and label "DO NOT EAT". To reuse, bang frozen bag gently on a counter edge to loosen vegetables.

**ALCOHOL PACK:** Combine 3 cups of water with 1 cup of rubbing alcohol in a zip-lock bag and freeze overnight until slushy. Wrap wash-cloth or towel over the bag and apply to affected area. Refreeze after use. This mixture is unsafe to drink or eat. Ensure that the bag does not leak on other items in your freezer, or get into the hands of small children.

**POLAR CARE "COLD THERAPY":** Polar pads may be recommended or given to you. Please follow the specific instructions that accompany the unit. *Never* apply the polar pad directly onto your skin as this may result in serious skin injury.