

# Post-Op Instructions: Distal Biceps Tendon Repair

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**PLEASE READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS COMPLETELY AND ASK FOR CLARIFICATION IF NECESSARY - DIRECT QUESTIONS TO YOUR NURSE BEFORE LEAVING THE SURGERY CENTER OR VIA PHONE/EMAIL TO OUR STAFF AFTER ARRIVING HOME**

## WOUND CARE

- You will be put in an immobilizing splint on the day of surgery. You will follow up in the office 10-14 days from surgery to have your splint and dressing removed.
- 48 hours after surgery it is ok to shower. THE SPLINT MUST REMAIN DRY. Please cover it with a plastic bag and tape for showering.
- After the splint is removed, you will transition into a hinged elbow brace. The incision will remain covered with clear band-aids (SteriStrips). No suture removal is required.

## MEDICATIONS

- You can begin the prescription pain medication provided to you upon arriving home and continue every 4-6 hours as needed for pain.
- Most patients will require some narcotic pain medication for a short period of time – this can be taken as per the directions on the bottle.
- Common side effects of the pain medication are nausea, drowsiness, and constipation – to decrease the side effects, take medication with food – if constipation occurs, consider taking an over-the-counter laxative such as Dulcolax or Colace.
- If you are having problems with nausea and vomiting, contact the office to possibly have your medication changed (1-800-974-5633)
- Do not drive a car or operate machinery while taking narcotic medication.
- Ibuprofen 200-600mg (i.e. Advil) may be taken in between the narcotic pain medication to help smooth out the post-operative ‘peaks and valleys’, reduce the overall amount of pain medication required, and increase the time intervals between narcotic pain medication usage.

## ICE THERAPY

- Beginning immediately following surgery, use the ice machine (when prescribed as directed for the first 2-3 days following surgery. Ice at your discretion thereafter.
- When using “real” ice, avoid direct skin contact > 20 mins to prevent damage/frostbite of the skin. Check the skin frequently for excessive redness, blistering, or other signs of frostbite. When using the ice machine, it is okay to ice continuously as long as you check the skin frequently.

## ACTIVITY

- For the first 10-14 days after surgery, you will remain in immobilizing splint. You will schedule an in-person splint removal visit 10-14 days after surgery.
- After your first postoperative visit, you will transition to a hinged elbow brace that you will wear at all times until 6 weeks from the day of surgery. You may remove the elbow brace for hygiene.
- It is ok to sleep however you are comfortable.
- Do not engage in activities that increase elbow pain over the first 10-14 days following surgery.
- NO driving. You will be cleared to drive after the first postoperative visit if narcotic pain medication has been discontinued.
- Air travel is permitted 14 days after surgery. Air travel and immobility increase the risk of blood clots. Unless you have been previously instructed to avoid aspirin products for medical reasons, or if you are under age 16, ensure that you are taking 81 mg baby aspirin twice daily beginning the day after surgery to minimize the risk of blood clots.

**EXERCISE**

- Begin exercises 3x daily starting the day after surgery (wrist flexion/extension) unless otherwise instructed. See the last page for reference. If the exercises cause pain, stop, and try again later in the day.
- Elbow stiffness and discomfort are normal following surgery.
- Formal physical therapy (PT) will begin after your first postoperative visit or no sooner than 10 days after surgery. Reach out to your chosen PT location as soon as possible to schedule PT to start after your first post-op visit.

**DIET**

- Begin with clear liquids and light foods (Jello, soup, etc.).
- Progress to your normal diet as tolerated.

**APPOINTMENT**

- Your postoperative appointment will be made prior to surgery. You will receive a reminder from the office prior to the visit. This will be 10-14 days after surgery at your surgeon's office.

**\*\*EMERGENCIES\*\***

Contact the practice hotline at 1-800-974-5633 if any of the following are present:

- Unrelenting pain, despite taking medications as prescribed.
- Fever (over 101°). It is normal to have a low-grade fever following surgery.
- Continuous drainage or bleeding from incisions (a small amount of drainage is expected)
- Difficulty breathing
- Excessive nausea/vomiting uncontrolled

## ELBOW POST-OPERATIVE EXERCISES

### WRIST FLEXION / EXTENSION



Actively bend wrist forward.  
Then backwards as far as you can.  
Repeat 10-15 times. Do 3 sessions per day.