
Post-Operative Instructions

Digital Nerve Repair

Bandages & Ace Wrap:

Your post-operative dressing has several layers you need to understand in order to properly care for your hand, wrist and forearm following your surgery. Your incision was closed with fine absorbable sutures that do not need to be removed. The incision line is then coated with a thin film of antibacterial ointment, Bacitracin, followed by a non-adherent mesh gauze that is easily peeled away from the skin once your dressing is taken down in the office.

The more superficial layers of your dressing contain 4x8in gauze that is loosely wrapped with soft cotton cast padding. Next, several layers of plaster are laid down and extend all the way from your forearm to beyond your finger-tips. This piece of plaster is referred to as a dorsal blocking splint and it is **EXTREMELY IMPORTANT** you leave this in place until further instructions are given. This plaster keeps your finger in a flexed posture to allow your repaired nerve to heal with minimal tension at the repair site. The outermost visible layer is called Bias. This is a stretchy, elastic cotton wrap that won't constrict blood flow into or out of your hand.

Occasionally, there will be a small amount of blood in this dressing, which is nothing to worry about, however if you see a lot of bleeding please call my office. I will remove this dressing 7-10 days after surgery and place a new dressing over your sutures. At this time you will be placed into a custom molded dorsal blocking splint by the therapist and start early range of motion exercises under the strict supervision of the therapist.

Washing & Bathing:

You should keep the dressing clean and dry until I see you in the office following your surgery and until your stitches come out. A watertight plastic bag with rubber bands around the opening work well while showering. However, some find it easier to take a bath and rest the operated hand outside of the tub. The wound may not get immersed in any still bodies of water (bath, pool, hot tub, lake, ocean, etc...) until 14 days after your surgery. Immersion in water prior to this can cause the wound to breakdown or get infected. If you are placed into a cast at the first office visit then cleaning the wound becomes irrelevant as you won't be able to access it.

Motion, Ice & Elevation:

It is extremely important that postoperative swelling is minimized so that your hand and wrist do not get stiff. To help prevent swelling it is important to frequently apply ice and keep your hand elevated above your heart level for the first 48 hours after surgery. An ice pack from a store or cubes from your freezer placed in a zip lock bag work well. These should always be wrapped in a small towel like a washcloth and then applied to



530 Lakehurst Rd, Suite 101
Toms River, NJ 08755

2 Hospital Plaza, Suite 310
Old Bridge, NJ 08857
732-349-8454

Michael Pensak, M.D.

the dressing, 10 minutes on the front and 10 minutes on the back. This should be done roughly once an hour while awake. Never leave the ice on for more than 20 minutes and if the cold sensation becomes painful remove it immediately.

You may very gently wiggle your fingers in the splint to help keep swelling down and minimize scarring. I will notify you when it is safe to start lifting up objects with your operated extremity but this won't be for several weeks following your surgery in most instances.

NOTE: When you wake up from surgery your fingers will be numb from the numbing agent I administer just prior to your surgery and at the termination of your case or from the regional block administered by the anesthesiologist. This will usually wear off by the end of the day. It is completely fine for you to move your fingers while they are numb.

Hand Therapy:

Almost all patients will be sent to therapy at the first post-operative visit to begin early range of motion throughout a protective arc that I will establish at the time your surgery is completed. Early range of motion is extremely important to maximize your range of motion and minimize scarring and swelling. The relationship you establish with the therapist and your dedication to your exercises will also be extremely important as you recover from your nerve repair.

Follow up appointment:

We try to give all of our patients a follow-up office visit at the time we schedule your surgery. I will usually see you 7-10 days after surgery to check your wound, range of motion and to remove your stitches.

Follow up appointment: _____

Medications:

I will usually prescribe the narcotic Oxycodone rather than Percocet so that you can supplement with Tylenol on the side and not have to worry about excessive Tylenol consumption. Oxycodone is Percocet without the Tylenol. This medication should be taken every 6 hours at the dose prescribed. However, you may supplement with Ibuprofen and/or Tylenol every 6 hours, offset by three hours from the narcotic. For example, in a given 24 hour period, you would take Oxycodone at 6, 12, 18 and 24 hours and the Ibuprofen and/or Tylenol at 3, 9 15, 21. This way, you have medication on board every 3 hours. I find that it leads to better pain relief. If you were ever told that you can't take non-steroidal anti-inflammatories which is the class of medication Ibuprofen belongs to, or that you can't take Tylenol, then simply stick with just the narcotic. Tylenol and Ibuprofen should be taken in accordance with the directions on the bottle.

Some patients, when taking the first few doses of Oxycodone, may experience nausea or an episode of vomiting. To prevent this, take the medicine with food and be patient while the medicine begins to work. Usually, after the first few doses the nausea will go away. This medication may also cause skin itching and a



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slight rash. If either of those happen please notify us but they will usually subside with Benadryl so long as you have no contraindications to taking that medication.

What to watch out for:

- Worsening pain despite taking pain medication
- Persistent drainage from the wound after surgery
- Foul smelling drainage
- Increasing redness, pain or swelling around the surgical site
- Fever greater than 101
- Unable to keep food or water down for more than one day

Who to call for questions or problems:

If you are having problems or there are questions you need answered then please call our office at 732-349-8454 and our staff will assist you. Our hours of operation for our phone room are as follows: Monday through Thursday 8:30am- 4:30pm and Friday 8:00am – 4:00pm.

We realize that after surgery some problems or questions are urgent and cannot wait until normal working hours. Under these circumstances we have a service that will get the message to a doctor on call for our office by calling the main number 732-349-8454.

*****If an emergency were to occur please go to the nearest ER for immediate attention.**

Michael Pensak, M.D.