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## **Post-Operative Instructions Hand/Wrist/Forearm Infections**

### **Bandages & Ace Wrap:**

Your post-operative dressing has several layers you need to understand in order to properly care for your lower extremity during the weeks following your surgery. Your incision was closed with fine absorbable sutures that do not need to be removed in the office. The incision line is usually 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. The outermost visible layer is an Ace bandage and a splint.

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 when I see you in the office after surgery and place a new dressing and check your incision.

### **Washing & Bathing:**

You should keep the dressing clean and dry until I see you in the office following your surgery unless I have told you otherwise. 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 extremity outside of the tub.

**If I told you in the hospital it is ok to get the wound wet with running water then the dressing can be taken down by you and rewrapped after it has been dried off with sterile gauze and loose ace bandages.**

**NO BATHS, POOLS, HOT TUBS OR IMMERSION IN POOLS OF WATER UNTIL I TELL YOU OTHERWISE.**

### **Motion, Ice & Elevation:**

It is extremely important that postoperative swelling is minimized. To help prevent swelling it is important to frequently apply ice and keep your arm 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 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.

Of utmost importance is that you wiggle your fingers about a minute or two every hour while awake. This helps keep blood circulating throughout your arm which further diminishes swelling.



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### **Hand Therapy:**

A small percentage of patients will need hand therapy following surgery. When you are seen at your first post-operative appointment I will decide if therapy is necessary in your case.

For those that need hand therapy, the goal of hand therapy is to first assess how your body responded to the surgical procedure. Your therapist will start range of motion and strength exercises on your first visit. If they find anything unexpected they will let me know right away.

### **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 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:



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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.**

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