

**Brian Forsythe, MD**  
Sports Medicine  
Shoulder, Elbow, Knee Arthroscopy  
Shoulder Replacement Surgery



**MIDWEST  
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AT RUSH**

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## **DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS & PHYSICAL THERAPY PROTOCOL: Upper Extremity Fracture**

- ❖ Initial recovery after shoulder surgery entails healing, controlling swelling and discomfort. The following instructions are intended as a guide to help you achieve these goals until your 1<sup>st</sup> postoperative visit.

- ❖ **COMFORT**

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- **Cold Therapy**

- If you elected to receive the **circulating cooling device**, this can be used continuously for the first 3 days, (while the initial post-op dressing is on). After 3 days, the cooling device should be applied 3 times a day for 20-30 minute intervals.
    - If you elected to receive the **gel wrap**, this may be applied for 20 minutes on, 20 minutes off as needed. You may apply this over the post-op dressing. Once the dressing is removed, be sure to place a barrier (shirt, towel, cloth, etc.) between your skin and the gel wrap.
    - If you elected to use **regular ice**, this may be applied for 20 minutes on, 20 minutes off as needed. You may apply this over the post-op dressing. Once the dressing is removed, be sure to place a barrier (shirt, towel, cloth, etc.) between your skin and the gel wrap.

- **Medication**

- **Pain Medication-** Take medications as prescribed, but only as often as necessary. Avoid alcohol and driving if you are taking pain medication.
      - You have been provided a narcotic prescription postoperatively. Use this medication sparingly for moderate to severe pain.
      - **You are allowed two (2) refills of your narcotic prescription if necessary.**
      - When refilling pain medication, weaning down to a lower potency or non-narcotic prescription is recommended as soon as possible.
      - Extra strength Tylenol may be used for mild pain.
      - Over the counter anti-inflammatory medication (Ibuprofen, Aleve, Motrin, etc.) should be **avoided** for the first 4 weeks following surgery.

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- **Anti-coagulation medication:** A medication to prevent post-operative blood clots has been prescribed (Aspirin, Lovenox, etc.) This is the only medication that MUST be taken as prescribed until directed to stop by Dr. Forsythe.
  - **Nausea Medication** – Zofran (Odansetron) has been prescribed for nausea. You may take this as needed per the prescription instructions.
  - **Constipation Medication** - Colace has been prescribed for constipation. Both your pain medication and the anesthesia can cause constipation. Take this as needed.
  - **Driving** – Driving is NOT permitted as long as the sling is necessary.

#### ❖ ACTIVITIES

- You are immobilized with a splint, full time, for approximately the first 6 weeks. Your doctor can tell you when you can this at your 1<sup>st</sup> postoperative visit. The sling may be removed for exercises.
- Physical therapy will begin some time after surgery.
- Athletic activities such as throwing, lifting, swimming, bicycling, jogging, running, and stop-and-go sports should be avoided until cleared by Dr. Forsythe.

#### ❖ WOUND CARE

- **Bathing** - Tub bathing, swimming, and soaking of the shoulder should be avoided until allowed by your doctor - Usually 2-3 weeks after your surgery. Keep the dressing on, clean and dry after surgery.
  - You may shower 3 days after surgery with WATERPROOF band-aids on. Apply new band-aids after showering.
  - Use caution when showering. Slipping or falling puts you at risk for re-injury.
- **Dressings**
  - If an AquaCel dressing was applied, please keep this on until your post op visit. Dressing is occlusive and can remain in place. Showering is ok post op day one.
  - If a bulky/paper dressing was applied, this should remain clean and dry. Dressing can be removed on post op day 3, then showering is ok. Use waterproof bandages over the incision site.
- **Sling/splint**
  - Your sling is to remain in place at all times except when showering.

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- **If you are fitted with a splint**, it should remain on until your first postoperative appointment.

❖ EATING

- Your first few meals, after surgery, should include light, easily digestible foods and plenty of liquids, since some people experience slight nausea as a temporary reaction to anesthesia.

❖ CALL YOUR PHYSICIAN IF:

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- Pain in your extremity persists or worsens in the first few days after surgery.
- Excessive redness or drainage of cloudy or bloody material from the wounds (Clear red tinted fluid and some mild drainage should be expected). Drainage of any kind 5 days after surgery should be reported to the doctor.
- You have a temperature elevation greater than 101°
- You have pain, swelling, or redness in your arm or hand.
- You have numbness or weakness in your arm or hand.

❖ RETURN TO THE OFFICE

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- Your first return to our office should be within the first 1-2 weeks after your surgery. You can find your appointment date and time for this first post-operative visit in the post op instruction folder.