

## POSTOPERATIVE INFORMATION

Keck Medicine  
of USC

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PATIENT STICKER

### POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS – SHOULDER FRACTURE

#### GENERAL INFORMATION:

1. You can apply ice to the shoulder 20 minutes at a time 3-4 times per day. This will help reduce the swelling and minimize the pain.
2. Your arm will be in a sling following surgery. You will be in this sling for the next 1-2 weeks until you are comfortable. This includes sleeping with it on as well. The most important factor about sling usage and position is comfort for you. Adjust the sling so that it is most comfortable to you. I will let you know the exact duration of sling usage at your follow-up visit.
3. You should schedule an appointment with a physical therapist. They will instruct you in some exercises that you will begin doing right away. They will also instruct you how to dress yourself and apply the sling. These exercises should be done twice daily. Avoid lifting objects with the arm. You may write and type, but not drive. Driving will commence at 1-2 weeks when the sling is removed.
4. You may be more comfortable sleeping in a semi-seated position the first few nights following surgery. Keep a pillow propped under the elbow and forearm for comfort. If you have a recliner type of chair it might be beneficial. If not, that is fine too, but it would be helpful to sleep propped up with pillows behind your operated shoulder as well under your elbow and forearm. This will reduce pulling on the suture lines.
5. Prescriptions for pain medication and an anti-inflammatory will be prescribed for you. You should avoid taking pain medications on an empty stomach as it will make you nauseous.

#### DISCHARGE UNTIL POST-OP VISIT:

1. Ice the shoulder for 20-30 minutes at least 4 times per day for the first few days. Then use it 2-3 times a day after doing your exercises.
2. Change the dressing with clean, sterile gauze daily. When the dressing is dry, you may change it every 2-3 days. **Do Not** remove the white steri-strip tape that covers that incision. **Do not** put anything including bacitracin or ointments on or near the incisions.
3. You may shower 96 hours after surgery but **Do Not** get the sutures wet. Wrap your shoulder with plastic wrap and secure it with tape. Dr. Petrigliano will likely clear you to get the wound wet at the wound check visit 7- 10 days postoperatively.
4. You can remove your sling for short periods only when you are sitting in a chair not doing any activity. However, your elbow must be supported by pillows. You must wear the sling if you are doing any activity, especially while you are in public places for the next 5-6 weeks.
5. Formal physical therapy will usually begin after 2 weeks. Dr. Petrigliano will provide a detailed prescription for therapy when you come for your first postoperative check.

## **POSTOPERATIVE INFORMATION**

### **DISCHARGE UNTIL POST-OP VISIT (CONTINUED)**

6. Do not drink alcoholic beverages or take illicit drugs when taking pain medications.
7. Return to work is determined on a case by case basis.
8. When dressing, put your operative arm in the sleeve first. When getting undressed, take your operative arm out last. Loose fitting, button-down shirts are recommended.
9. In most states, it is against the law to drive while your arm is in a sling.
10. First postoperative appointment is 7-10 days post-surgery. An X-ray will be taken prior to this visit and the wound will be checked, steri-strips changed.