Postoperative Instructions for Rotator Cuff Repair- Dr. Trueblood

You are going home after having rotator cuff surgery. This does not mean that you are on your own. Please read the instructions below carefully and if you have any other questions or concerns, there is always someone available to talk you through your troubles. Please call the Advanced Orthopedic Specialists main number (573-335-8257) to speak with Leslie, Dr. Trueblood’s nurse, if it is between the hours of 8AM and 4PM.

After office hours, you can reach the orthopaedic surgeon on-call through our answering service at 573-388-2626 (the main number will get you to the answering service, too.).

Managing Pain

Even though your external incisions are very small, you have had a significant surgical procedure on the inside of your shoulder. The numbing medication provided for your “block” will generally provide 12-24 hours of significant pain relief during and after surgery. When it wears off, however, many patients become very anxious because of their pain. Rest assured that you were sent home with more than adequate resources for treating your pain.

- **First**: avoid lying flat on your back. Instead, either rest in a reclining chair or prop your body up with cushions or pillows in bed. An additional pillow, placed behind your elbow, may also help significantly.
- **Second**: use the cold-therapy unit provided after surgery as much of the time as possible after surgery. In two or three days, you can begin to use it only as you see necessary.
- **Third**: Dr. Trueblood provided you with a prescription for postoperative pain medications on the day of surgery. Please follow the bottle directions with respect to dose and frequency and always take these medications with food. Patients will often report nausea when these pills are taken on an empty stomach. Have a dose sitting next to wherever you plan to sleep on the night after surgery and take the pills as soon as you begin to feel your shoulder again.
- **Fourth**: While anti-inflammatories like Ibuprofen and Aleve have been theoretically linked to impaired tendon healing, this is far from conclusive. If the interventions discussed above are not adequate for your desired level of comfort, please feel free to take three over-the-counter Ibuprofen (200mg Advil) tablets every six hours or two over the counter naproxen tablets (220mg Aleve) every twelve hours for no more than two days at a time.
- Patients taking blood-thinning medications or who have chronic kidney insufficiency (your doctor may have talked to you about dialysis) should not take Advil or Naproxen.
- **DO NOT TAKE TYLENOL** when taking Norco or Percocet, the common narcotic pain medications used by Dr. Trueblood. These pills already use Tylenol and additional Tylenol may injure your liver.
Cold-unit for pain and inflammation:
  ○ Day 1-2: as much as possible
  ○ Day 3-6: as needed

Precautions
  ● No range of motion of the shoulder. This optimizes your opportunity for tendon-bone healing.
  ● Maintain arm in sling. Only remove to allow elbow to hang at side of body.
    ○ Sleep in sling.
  ● No lifting of objects.
  ● May use a lightly loaded fork or tea cup/ juice glass to feed self
  ● May type and write with hand directly in front of body. Please do not rotate through the shoulder.
  ● No supporting of body weight by hands or elbow.
  ● Keep incisions clean and dry. May shower on the 4th day after surgery. Please let water run off your skin—do not scrub, and then pat your incisions dry with a clean towel. Use a different towel for your shoulder than you use for the rest of you.
  ● Don’t get stiff where it isn’t necessary. Move your elbow, wrist, and hand several times a day with a full range of motion. Don’t just squeeze a ball.
  ● Make sure that there is both water and ice in the cold therapy unit at all times when the device is running. The engine does not have a cooling unit and will overheat quickly if the ice is melted. Have a friend or family member check at least once an hour while it is running.

Exercises
  ○ You will start Physical Therapy at the facility of your choice within the next 3-5 days. Please remember that what you do in therapy is at least as important as what Dr. Trueblood did during surgery. Your home exercises should be performed daily.
  ○ A prescription for therapy and a copy of Dr. Trueblood’s postoperative protocol was included in your discharge materials. If you lose either of these in the interval before starting therapy, please contact Leslie Hedge at (573)388-3026.
  ○ If your therapist misplaces the postoperative protocol, copies are filed on the Advanced Orthopedic Specialists website at: http://www.advancedorthopedicspecialists.com.

Can I smoke after surgery?
  ● Smoking is bad for you. Dr. Trueblood recommends that you stop. No exceptions.
  ● Smoking is especially bad after this sort of surgery as it interferes with tendon healing.
Is my recovery going to be just like my friend’s after they had shoulder surgery?

- Maybe, but probably not. No two people are exactly the same and no two recoveries are entirely the same. In broad strokes, it will be at least 3 months before your shoulder is fit for the majority of daily needs and usually at least 6 months before you will be back to your full, pre-injury level of activity. Some people take up to a year.
- The most important thing is to focus on what your shoulder is right now and do what Dr. Trueblood asks you to do in order to make it a little better tomorrow. Don’t be too frustrated when it isn’t easy or if it isn’t what you thought is should be. Don’t try to skip ahead by pushing beyond the limits/ exercises that Dr. Trueblood and your therapist recommend. Little improvements add up to big improvements quickly enough and we’ll all get through this together.

Good luck! Do not hesitate to call with questions or problems!