Information for patients going home after their surgery

Read this pamphlet to learn about:

- How to take care of yourself at home
- How to cope with pain
- What to do in case of emergency

You have had a general anesthetic.
Do not drive a car or drink alcohol for 24 hours.
What can I eat and drink after my surgery?

You can eat and drink as you normally would right away.

If you feel nauseated (sick to your stomach) or you are vomiting, you can buy anti-nausea medicine, such as Gravol®, from your pharmacy without a prescription. Take the anti-nausea medicine as directed and drink liquids until the nausea passes. Then slowly start to eat what you usually eat.

How much activity is safe?

Rest at home on the first day.

If you had a regional block (if your elbow or arm was frozen with medicine), it will take 4 to 12 hours for the feeling to return to normal.

- The area you were operated on will feel numb and weak.
- You will have no control of your arm or hand.
- Do not use your hand or elbow until all the feeling and strength returns.
- Protect your frozen arm from being bumped or injured.
- Be careful with things that are hot, like tea or coffee. You could burn yourself without feeling it.

If you were given a sling to support your elbow, wear it the way that your surgeon or nurse asked you to.

If your surgeon does not want you to wear the sling, take it off right away when the numbness passes and the feeling in your hand returns.
Important:

If the numbness or tingling in your elbow or arm does NOT go away 24 hours after your surgery:

• Call your surgeon
  or
• Call 416 340 3155 and ask to speak to the 'Orthopedic Resident on call'
  or
• Go to the nearest hospital emergency department

What activities can I do at home?

When the feeling returns to your elbow or hand, remove the sling, but keep your operated elbow raised on 1 or 2 pillows when you are sitting or lying down. This helps decrease swelling and bleeding.

• Slowly go back to doing your regular activities, but avoid doing activities with your operated elbow.

• Do NOT lift with the operated elbow or hand. For example, do not carry groceries, children or pets.

• Do NOT do any strenuous activities, exercises or sports like swimming, shovelling snow or weight lifting until your surgeon tells you it is safe.

Your surgeon will let you know when you can go back to work, play sports and drive a vehicle.

Start physiotherapy if your surgeon asked you to. Make an appointment at an outpatient centre close to your home or work.
How do I take care of my wound?

Always keep your dressing or tensor clean and dry. Remove the dressing if your surgeon asks you to.

- If your surgeon asks you to remove the dressing or tensor, remove it and DO NOT put a dressing back on. Put a clean bandage on the wound until you see your surgeon.

- If you have steri-strips (white strips) under the dressing, leave them on for 7 to 10 days. If they begin to fall off earlier, take them off and throw them away.

- If you have stitches, they will be removed on your next follow-up appointment.

Put an ice pack on your elbow for 15 to 20 minutes, 5 or 6 times a day. Do this for the first 2 to 3 days. Do not put the ice pack directly on your skin.

Be careful not to get the tensor and dressing wet.

Do not use heat packs on your operated elbow.

When can I shower?

You can take a shower 2 or 3 days after your surgery.

- Before you take a shower, wrap your elbow in plastic. Do this every time you shower until your stitches or strips are taken out.

- Try not to get your dressing or tensor wet.

Do not take baths until your surgeon says it's ok.
How do I cope with my pain?

Pain is normal after this operation and should get better with time.

We will give you a prescription for pain medicine. Take it to a pharmacy to get it filled and follow the directions on the bottle.

• Take the medication as soon as you feel pain. Do not wait until the pain gets bad.
• You can take the pain medicine every 4 hours for the first 24 hours.
• As you have less pain, start to take less pain medicine until you don't need any pain medicine at all.

You may also be given a prescription for the swelling. This is called an anti-inflammatory. Fill it at the pharmacy and follow the directions for taking the medicine.

What if I am constipated?

Pain medicine can make you constipated. To help prevent constipation:

• Eat food high in fibre such as whole grains, vegetables and fruit
• Drink 3 to 5 glasses of liquid each day

If you have not had a bowel movement in 72 hours, take Milk of Magnesia. You can buy this from your pharmacy without a prescription. Follow the directions on the bottle.
## Watch for these problems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>What to expect</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>More bleeding than usual</strong></td>
<td>• bleeding that soaks through the dressing or tensor</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• bleeding will not stop even after putting pressure on it for 15 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>A lot of pain</strong></td>
<td>• pain does not get better when you take pain medicine</td>
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<td>• give the doctor your pharmacy’s phone number when you call. The doctor might want to call your pharmacy to change your prescription</td>
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<td><strong>Swelling</strong></td>
<td>• hand on your operated arm becomes swollen and painful</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• fingers feel cool</td>
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<td>• change in the colour of your hand or fingers</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• less feeling in your fingers or you cannot move your fingers</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fever</strong></td>
<td>• temperature higher than 38° Celsius or 101° Farhenheit</td>
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Call your surgeon, or your family doctor or come to the Toronto Western Hospital emergency department. If you are from out of town, go to the nearest emergency department if any of the problems above happen to you.
When is my follow-up visit?

Your surgeon will see you in the Fracture Clinic, unless your surgeon gives you different instructions. Please call the Fracture Clinic at 416 603 5858 to make the appointment.

The appointment should be 1 to 2 weeks after your surgery.

Where is the Fracture Clinic?

East Wing – 1st Floor (Room 557)
Toronto Western Hospital, 399 Bathurst Street

☐ Dr Chahal    ☐ Dr. Matthew
☐ Dr. Moro     ☐ Dr. Ogilvie-Harris
☐ Dr. Syed     ☐ Dr. Theodoropoulos
☐ Other ____________________________

Date: ____________________ Time: ______________

☐ Altum Health: If you are getting follow up care at Altum Health, they will call you with the date, time and location of your follow-up appointment.

Special Instructions for you:

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