

Shoulder Surgery

Instructions for patients going home after shoulder surgery



UHN

**You have had a general anesthetic.
Do not drive a car or drink alcohol for 24 hours.**

You have had this type of shoulder surgery:

- Acromioplasty**
This is the most common repair of the rotator cuff (or acromioclavicular joint). The surgeon shaves the underside of the acromion which increases the space between the injured rotator cuff and the acromium. The new space helps prevent the tendon from pinching when you move your shoulder.
- Subacromial Decompression**
The surgeon removes bone from the underside of the acromion to create more room for the rotator cuff.
- Labral (Slap) Repair**
This surgery repairs the torn labrum lining of the joint. The surgeon inserts screws into the shoulder joint to hold the labrum up.
- Anterior Stabilization**
This surgery repairs the ligament's holding the ball and socket of the shoulder. It is repaired (if torn) or tightened (if loose).
- Acromioclavicular Joint Repair**
The surgeon repairs the joint that connects a part of the scapula (shoulder blade) called the acromion to the clavicle (collarbone) either because the joint has worn out, become painful, or because bone spurs have developed causing pressure on the muscle underneath.
- Distal Clavicle Resection**
The surgeon removes a small part of bone at the end of the clavicle (collarbone) so the scapula and clavicle no longer rub together.

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What can I eat and drink after my operation?

- You can go back to eating and drinking what you normally would right away.
- If you feel nauseated (sick to your stomach) or you are vomiting you can get anti-nausea medication from your pharmacy without a prescription (such as Gravol). Take it as directed and continue with fluids until the nausea passes. Then gradually return to what you would usually eat.



How do I take care of my wound?

- Keep your bandage (dressing) clean and dry at all times.
- Remove your bandage 3 days after your operation.
- Do not put the dressing back on, but apply clean band-aids to the wounds or puncture sites.
- Keep the wounds covered with clean band-aids until you see your surgeon.
- If you have steri-strips (white strips), leave them in place until you see your surgeon. If they begin to fall off earlier, remove them and throw them away.
- If you have stitches, they will be removed on your next follow-up appointment.
- Put ice compresses on your shoulder for 15 to 20 minutes. Use ice packs, frozen vegetables or crushed ice in a plastic bag and wrapped in a thin towel. Be careful not to get the dressing wet. Do not put ice pack directly on your skin.
*Do this 5 or 6 times a day for the first 2 or 3 days after your operation.
- Do NOT use heat packs on your operated shoulder.



When can I shower?

- You can take a shower 2 or 3 days after your operation.
- Keep the dressings and puncture sites clean and dry at all times.
- Before you take a shower, wrap your shoulder in plastic (wrap in plastic until your stitches or the strips have been taken out).
- If the band-aids get wet, replace them with clean dry ones.
- Do not take baths until your surgeon says it's safe to do so.



How do I cope with pain?

You will have pain after this operation, but it will get better with time. Take the prescribed medication for the pain so that you can do your usual daily activities.

- We will give you a prescription for the pain medication. Take it to a pharmacy to get it filled and follow the directions for taking the medication.
- If you had a Regional Block (your shoulder or arm is numb/frozen) it might take a few hours for the feeling in your shoulder to normal again.
- When you start to feel tingling in your arm, start taking your pain medication. Do not wait until the pain becomes too severe.
- We may also give you a prescription for your swelling. Take the prescription to a pharmacy and take the medication as instructed on the bottle.
- Take the pain medication every 4 hours for the first 24 to 48 hours. After 24 to 48 hours, you can gradually decrease your pain medication as your pain gets better.
- It is best to take your pain medication before you do any activities that may cause more pain.

What if I have nausea?

Pain medications may cause nausea.

- To prevent nausea take your medications on a full stomach.
- If the nausea continues, take Gravol as directed until the nausea passes.

What if I am constipated?

Pain medications can cause constipation. To prevent constipation:

- Drink lots of fluids (3 to 5 glasses of water everyday - each glass should be about 8 ounces).
- Eat foods that are high in fibre (for example bran and fruits). If you have not had a bowel movement for 72 hours, take Milk of Magnesia (follow the directions on the bottle). You can buy this from your pharmacy without a prescription.



How much activity is safe?

- Go home and rest today.
- If you had a regional block (if your shoulder or arm has been frozen) it will take 4 to 12 hours for the feeling to return to normal again. It will feel numb and weak and you will have no control of your shoulder or arm.
- Do not use your arm and hand until all the feeling and strength has come back.
- While your arm is frozen, protect it from being bumped or injured.
- Be careful with things that are hot, like tea or coffee. You could burn yourself without feeling it.

Activities while at home

- You should gradually go back to doing your regular activities, but avoid doing activities with your operated arm or shoulder.
- Do NOT do any strenuous activities, exercises or sports (for example swimming, shoveling snow, weight lifting) until your surgeon tells you it is safe.
- Do NOT lift with the hand or shoulder that has been operated on (for example do not carry groceries, children or pets).
- Your surgeon will tell you when you can go back to work, play sports and drive a vehicle.
- If your surgeon has arranged physiotherapy, this should begin as instructed by your surgeon. Arrange this at an outpatient centre close to your home or work.

Important note: If the numbness or tingling in your shoulder or arm has NOT gone 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 you need to know about your sling

- If you have been given a sling to support your shoulder and arm, wear it as instructed. Your nurse or surgeon will check off (✓) one of the instructions below:
 - No sling required
 - Wear sling until the numbness and feeling has returned (between 4 to 12 hours only).
 - Wear sling at all times for 3 weeks.
 - Wear sling at all times for 6 weeks.
- Do NOT allow your wrist or hand to dangle out of the sling. Both should be supported in the sling at all times.
- While your arm is in the sling, exercise your fingers by opening and closing them. Make a fist and release it. Begin this when the feeling has returned to your arm and hand. **Do this 5 times every hour.**
- You may remove your arm from the sling to shower, change your dressing or to occasionally bend or straighten your elbow, but remember **do not** move your shoulder (if you have been instructed not to move it).

Can I exercise?

Your nurse or surgeon will check off (✓) one of the instructions below:

- Do not exercise.
- 24 hours after your surgery, begin exercises #1 to # 5.

How to do the exercises (if your nurse or surgeon has asked you to do them)

These exercises are to help improve the motion and strength of your shoulder.

- Do these exercises in a comfortable position.
- Take your medication as prescribed to lessen any discomfort.
- If pain and swelling make these exercises impossible to do right now, keep checking everyday to see if you can do them.
- Apply ice compresses to your shoulder after your exercises if you feel the need to.

Exercises

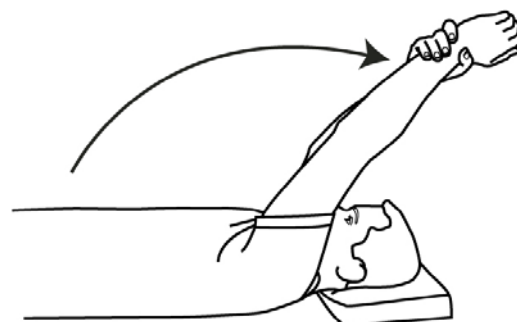
1. Pendular Exercise

- Stand leaning next to a table and support yourself onto the table with your unaffected hand.
- Let your operated arm hang down, relaxed and straight.
- Swing your arm forwards and backwards.
- Then change directions to swing your arm from side to side.
- Begin with small swings then increase, as you are able to.
- Do this exercise for 1-3 minutes every hour while awake.



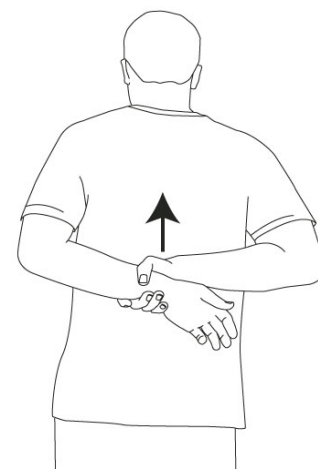
2. Assisted Forward Flexion

- Start this exercise lying flat and comfortably on a flat surface (i.e. bed) and then progress to doing this in a sitting position.
- Use your unaffected hand to raise your operated arm from the side of your body toward your head as far as you can go.
- Continuing doing this exercise until you can do it without the help of the unaffected arm.
- Do this exercise for 1 to 3 minutes every hour while awake.



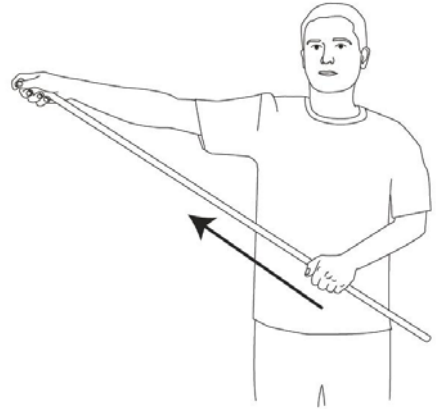
3. Hand Behind Back

- Place both arms behind your back.
- Grasp the wrist of your operated arm using your other hand.
- Lift your operated arm up your back as far as you can go.
- Do this for 1 to 3 minutes every hour while awake.



4. Assisted Abduction

- Hold one end of a stick with your operated hand.
- Use your other hand to slowly slide the stick up until your operated arm/shoulder is out straight to the side of your body.
- You can do this exercise in a lying, sitting or standing position.
- Do this exercise for 1 to 3 minutes every hour while awake.



5. Posterior Shoulder Stretch

- Take your operated arm and reach to touch behind your opposite shoulder.
- Keep your arm parallel with the ground.
- Use your unaffected arm to stretch the operated arm, by lightly pulling at the elbow.
- Hold this position for 30 seconds.
- Repeat 3 to 5 times, three times a day (in the morning, afternoon and evening)



Watch for these problems

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 if the following occurs:

Abnormal Bleeding that won't stop

- Bleeding that soaks through the dressing and tensor, that will not stop even after applying pressure for 15 minutes.

Severe Pain

- Severe pain that doesn't get better when you take the medication that was prescribed. Have the phone number of your pharmacy ready when you call, because the doctor might want to call your pharmacy to change your prescription.

Swelling

- If your arm or hand become swollen and painful and you cannot move it and there is a change in the colour of your hand and fingers.

Fever

- A temperature higher than 38°C or 101°F

Discharge from the wound sites

- If you have yellowish or green fluid leaking from the wound sites and/or redness at the wound sites.



Your follow up appointment

If you don't already have a follow-up appointment, please call the Fracture Clinic at 416-603-5858 to make one.

Your appointment should be 1 to 2 weeks after your operation.

Doctor: _____

Phone number _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

Location: _____

Special instructions for you

For more information
visit our website at
www.uhn.ca