

After Elbow Arthroscopy or Elbow Surgery

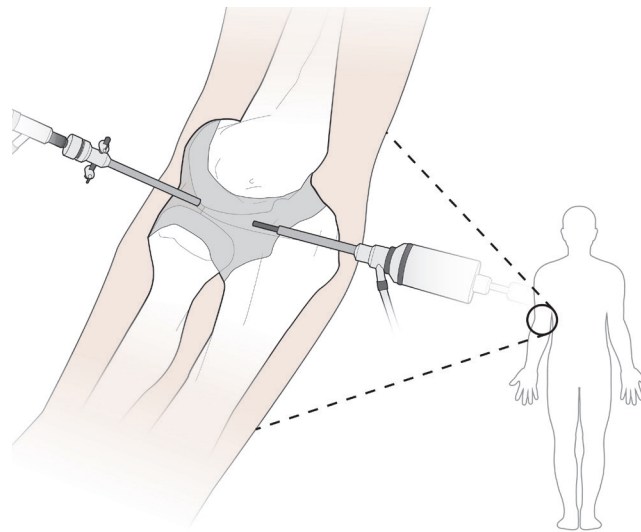
Read this pamphlet to learn about:

- How to take care of yourself
- What activities are safe
- How to cope with pain
- When to see the surgeon for a follow-up visit
- What to do in case of an emergency



You have had an anesthetic.

- Do not drive a car or drink alcohol for 24 hours.
- Have an adult stay with you overnight.



Arthroscope being inserted into the elbow joint



What can I eat and drink after my surgery?

- You can eat and drink what you usually would right away. Start slowly by having fluids and soups on the day of surgery. Then return to your normal meals the next day.
- If you feel nauseated (sick to your stomach) or you are vomiting, you can get anti-nausea medicine such as Gravol from your pharmacy without a prescription. Follow the directions on the label.
- Keep drinking fluids until the nausea passes. Then slowly return to eating your usual meals.

How much activity is safe?

Go home and rest on the first day. Slowly return to your normal activities, and follow the instructions below.

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

- The operated area 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 comes back.
- 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.

Important: If the numbness or tingling in your elbow or arm does NOT go away 24 hours after your surgery, call your surgeon or go to the nearest emergency department.

Wearing a sling

- If your surgeon asked you to wear a sling, follow your surgeon's instructions. Ask your day surgery nurse for information on how to wear the sling or find our pamphlet at www.uhnpatienteducation.ca.
- If your surgeon does NOT want you to wear a sling, take it off right away when the numbness passes and the feeling in your hand returns.
- Keep your operated elbow or arm raised on 1 or 2 pillows when your are sitting or lying down. This helps decrease swelling and bleeding.
- Follow your surgeon's instructions about what exercises you can do for your operated elbow.
- Call your surgeon's office if you have any questions concerning exercises of your operated shoulder or arm.

What activities can I do at home?

- Slowly return to 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.
- Do not remove your dressing unless your surgeon has asked you to remove it.
- 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 (tape) 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 at 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 or bathe?

- You can take a shower 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 is safe to do so.**

How do I cope with my pain?

Pain is normal after this surgery and should get better with time. To help you cope with the pain and get you back to your everyday activities, 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.
- As you have less pain, start to take less pain medicine until you don't need any pain medicine at all.
- We may give you a prescription to help with the swelling called an anti-inflammatory. Fill it at the pharmacy and follow the directions for taking the medicine.

Safely store and dispose your pain medicine

- Pain medicine that is not stored or disposed of safely could be stolen or taken by mistake.

Safe storage

- Store pain medicine in a locked drawer or cabinet.
- Do not share your pain medicine. Pain medicine prescribed to you can be dangerous to others.

Safe disposal

It is dangerous to keep unused or expired pain medicine that you no longer need.

- Take unused or expired pain medicine to a pharmacy for safe disposal.
- Do not flush medicine down the toilet.
- Do not throw medicine in the garbage.

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 a laxative like Milk of Magnesia. You can buy it from your pharmacy without a prescription.



Watch for these problems

Call your surgeon or your family doctor, or go to the Toronto Western Hospital emergency department if any of these problems happen to you. If you are from out of town, go to the nearest emergency department.

More bleeding than usual

- Bleeding that soaks through the dressing or tensor. Bleeding will not stop even after you put pressure on it for 15 minutes.

A lot of pain

- Pain that does not get better when you take pain medicine. Give the doctor your pharmacy's phone number when you call. The doctor might want to call your pharmacy to change your prescription.

Swelling

- Hand on your operated arm becomes swollen and painful.
- Fingers feel cool.
- Change in the colour of your hand or fingers.
- Less feeling in your fingers or you cannot move your fingers.

Fever

- Temperature higher than 38 °C or 101 °F.

When is my follow-up appointment?

Your follow-up appointment should be 1 to 2 weeks after your surgery. Your surgeon will see you in the Fracture Clinic, unless your surgeon gives you different instructions.

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.

Dr. Hall 416 864 6006

Dr. Leroux 416 603 6286

Dr. Moro 905 540 8448

Dr. Paul 416 603 5839

Dr. Pook 519 267 9299

Dr. Syed 416 603 5281

Dr. Veillette 416 603 5929

Other _____

Date: _____ Time: _____

Where is the Fracture Clinic?

Fell Pavilion – 1st Floor (Room 577)

Toronto Western Hospital, 399 Bathurst Street

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