Hardware Removal

For patients having hardware removed (such as metal, staples, wire, pins or screws) that was put in during a previous surgery

Read this brochure to learn about:

• How to take care of yourself at home
• What activities are safe to do
• How to cope with pain
• Problems to watch for
• When to get medical help
• What to know about your follow-up visit

You have had an anesthetic or narcotic medicine.

• Do not drive a car or drink alcohol for 24 hours.
• Have a responsible adult stay with you overnight.
What can I eat and drink after my surgery?

You can return to eating and drinking as normal. Slowly start by having fluids and soups on the day of the surgery. Then return to your normal meals the next day.

If you are feeling nauseated (sick to your stomach) or you are vomiting, you can get anti-nausea medicine from your pharmacy without a prescription. Take it as directed and keep drinking fluids until the nausea passes. Then slowly return to eating your normal foods.

How much activity is safe?

You can use your fingers, hand, elbow, ankle or foot as you normally would.

But for the first 2 weeks after your surgery:

- Do NOT do strenuous activities that would put stress on your affected limb. For example, do not garden or shovel snow.

- Your surgeon will tell you when you can go back to work and sports like tennis, jogging, cycling or swimming.

- If you have had hardware removed from your finger, hand or elbow, do NOT lift heavy objects. For example, do not carry groceries or lift young children or pets.

- When you are sitting or lying down, raise your hand or foot up on 1 or 2 pillows. This prevents swelling and bleeding.

- If you have had surgery on your foot, avoid standing for long periods of time.

If you were given a sling to support your frozen hand, take it off as soon as the feeling in your hand returns. This usually takes 4 to 6 hours.

If you had a Regional Block (if your hand or foot had been frozen) it may take a few hours for the feeling to return.
If your foot is numb, don’t walk or move around more than you have to until all the feeling and movement return.

How do I take care of my dressing and tensor bandage?

• Keep your wound clean and dry at all times.

• If your surgeon has instructed you not to remove the dressing, keep it clean and dry until your surgeon removes it at your follow-up appointment.

• If you have been instructed to remove your dressing, take it off 5 days after your surgery.

• If you have stitches under your dressing, you will need to wear a Band-Aid over your wound. You will need to the wear Band-Aid for the next 10 days (until the stitches are taken out).

• Your stitches should be taken off in 12 to 14 days. Make an appointment with your family doctor to have this done or make an appointment at the Fracture Clinic (call 416 603 5858) at Toronto Western Hospital.

• If you have steri-strips, leave them in place until they peel off on their own. You do not have to wear Band-Aids over the steri-strips. If they do not fall off on their own, remove them 10 days after your surgery.

• If you were given a tensor bandage, you can wear it for comfort and support for the first 3 days after your surgery. Do NOT put it on too tightly.

How do I shower or bathe?

• You can take a shower 5 days after your surgery once your dressing is removed.

• If you shower before the dressing is removed, wrap your foot/arm with plastic. Be careful not to wet your dressing.

• NO baths or swimming until your surgeon says it is safe to do so.

• If you have steri-strips, keep them in place. Pat the area dry gently.
How do I cope with pain?

It is normal to feel pain after having surgery. Your pain should get better after a few days. We will give you a prescription for pain medicine, and possibly for swelling. Take the prescription to a pharmacy and follow the directions for taking the medicine.

After the first 24 hours, you can gradually decrease your pain medicine as you feel more comfortable. (Take less and less pain medicine until you do not need any.)

Ice packs or your Cold Compress Cuff can help with your pain and swelling.

- Put an ice pack on for 15 minutes every hour.
- If you bought the Cold Compress Cuff, wear it as much as possible for the first 3 days, and then as needed. Follow the directions that come with cuff.
- **DO NOT use heat packs.**

What if I get constipated?

Pain medicine can cause constipation. To prevent constipation:

- ✓ Drink 3 to 5 glasses of water every day (each glass should be about 8 ounces).
- ✓ Eat foods that are high in fibre (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.
## What to do in an emergency

Call your surgeon’s office or go to the nearest emergency department if the following happens:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>What to expect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bleeding that won’t stop</td>
<td>• Press on the area for 30 minutes. If the bleeding does not stop and soaks the dressing, call your surgeon.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A lot of pain</td>
<td>• If your pain becomes very bad and it doesn’t get better when you take the pain medicine that we prescribed.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Please have the phone number for your pharmacy ready because the doctor may want to call the pharmacy to change your prescription.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• If you cannot reach either the surgeon or your family doctor, go the nearest hospital emergency department.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Swelling</td>
<td>• If your hand/foot or ankle is very swollen</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• If your fingers/toes are cold or have changed colour (they are pale white or bluish)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• You have less feeling in your hand/foot</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• You cannot move your toes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fever</td>
<td>• If your temperature goes higher than 38 °C or 101 °F</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fluid is leaking</td>
<td>• Green or yellow pus coming from the wound area.</td>
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Your follow-up appointment

Your follow-up appointment should be 2 weeks after your surgery. If you do not have a follow-up appointment, call:

☐ Fracture Clinic
   1st Floor-East Wing (Room 557)
   Toronto Western Hospital
   399 Bathurst St.
   Phone: 416 603 5858

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

Date: __________ Time: ______________________

☐ Dr. Latham  ☐ Dr. Leone
☐ Dr. Lau     ☐ Dr. Syed
☐ Dr. Leroux  ☐ Other __________

Special instructions for you

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________________________________________________________
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For more information visit www.uhn.ca and www.uhnpatienteducation.ca

Visit www.uhnpatienteducation.ca for more health information.

Contact us to provide feedback or request this brochure in a different format, such as large print or electronic formats: pfep@uhn.ca

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