



Steadman Hawkins Clinic of the Carolinas

Care Instructions After Shoulder Surgery

Here are general care directions to follow post-surgery along with specific instructions related to the shoulder.

General Care Instructions

Dressings

- Dressings will be removed during your first physical therapy visit, or you may remove dressings 48-72 hours after surgery.
- Do NOT touch, remove, change or clean any Steri-Strips you may be wearing.
- Do NOT apply or use any ointments such as betadine, Neosporin or peroxide on the wound site.
- Apply bandages only if drainage occurs.

Bathing

- Once incisions are dry and no longer draining, you may get them wet in the shower. Do NOT get in bath water or a pool for 2 weeks, unless specifically instructed to do so.
- Avoid hot tubs, saunas/steam rooms and hot showers for 4 weeks—they can increase your swelling.

Stitches

- Visible stitches will be removed or clipped at your 2-week follow-up visit.
- If you do not have visible sutures to remove, rest assured that they will dissolve under the skin.

Ice

- Ice your wound site for 20 minutes at a time, 4-5 times a day.
- NEVER place ice directly on your skin. Insulate the site with a towel. Icing helps decrease swelling and provides some pain relief.
- If your doctor has requested a cooling sleeve unit, you will be given instructions on its use before being discharged. Do not place the sleeve directly on your skin. Insulate the site with a towel.

Swelling

- It is normal to see swelling and/or bruising around your incision for the first 2 weeks.
- Redness, heightened pain, increased temperature (101°F or above) and/or abnormal drainage are NOT normal. Please call your doctor's office at once if you develop these conditions.

Proaxis Physical Therapy

You will have an appointment scheduled with Proaxis Therapy for a dressing change, for your doctor to see you and for you to begin physical therapy.

Medications

- Please follow all instructions on the bottle.
- Do not drink alcohol while taking pain medication.
- Do not take additional Tylenol unless instructed to do so.
- Do not drive while taking pain medication.
- If you have questions about your medications or if you need refills, please call before 3 p.m. Monday-Friday.

Shoulder-specific Care

Sling Instructions: Please follow any instructions that are checked.

- 1: A sling is provided for your comfort. You may remove the sling and let your arm hang by your side if it is more comfortable. Use your arm and hand for everyday activities (washing, dressing, eating, etc.).
- 2: You may remove your shoulder immobilizer to shower. Keep your arm in the same position as if it were in the immobilizer or let it hang straight down when showering. Wear the sling at all other times, including while sleeping.
- 3: A shoulder abduction pillow is provided for healing. Do NOT remove the immobilizer for any reason. Please do NOT let your arm hang straight down for any reason. Please do NOT try to hold it up without support. Limit your bathing to sponge baths.

Activities

- Let pain be your guide to activity (too much pain = too much activity).
- Do NOT use exercise machines unless approved to do so.
- Squeeze a small ball as much as possible to help decrease swelling.
- If your job involves little physical activity, you generally can return to work on the third day as long as you do not use the affected arm.
- If your job requires much lifting or use of your arm, discuss when you can return to work with your doctor.

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Elevation

Sleep in bed with your shoulder elevated on several pillows or sleep in a recliner for maximum comfort. Lying flat will not be very comfortable at first.

CPM (Continuous Passive Motion) Machine

If your doctor has prescribed a CPM for you, a representative from the company will come to your house to set it up and give you instructions on its use. The CPM helps restore range of motion in the front of your shoulder and is an important part of your rehabilitation. It is important that you use the machine as directed. If you have questions about the CPM machine, please contact the representative who set it up for you.

TENS Unit

For questions regarding your TENS unit (if this was ordered for you), please contact the representative whose number is on the card with the unit.