

## Ronak M. Patel, MD

# Elbow Fracture Surgery Post-Operative Instructions

Please bring all post-operative DME to the surgical facility the day of surgery (this includes all crutches, braces, slings, polar care machines, etc.)

### Diet

- You may resume your regular diet. However, start slow with clear liquids and gradually work your way back to your normal diet. This will help prevent nausea and vomiting.

### Wound Care

- Keep your splint/cast on until your follow-up visit with Dr. Patel.
- Your arm must remain absolutely 100% dry so do not get it wet. You can shower, but must keep your arm outside the shower, using saran wrap or a large plastic bag to protect your wounds. At your first clinic follow up, Dr. Patel will tell you when you can shower normally.
- Do not submerge your surgical arm or soak in a hot tub, swimming pool, or bath until your incisions have completely healed in approximately 4 weeks from surgery.
- Do not put any lotions or antibiotic ointments over the incisions until they are completely closed.
- Sutures/Staples will be removed at your first post-op visit.

### DVT Prevention

- You must wear your white TED hose compressive stocking for 4 weeks after surgery or until cleared by Dr. Patel. This stocking reduces swelling which improves healing and helps prevent blood clots.
- Please perform ankle pumps as this will help prevent blood clots.
- **Sometimes we have to prescribe a blood thinner to help prevent blood clots. Given your medical history, surgery and activity level:**
  - **You are recommended to take one 81mg / 325mg Aspirin once / twice daily by mouth. Do not take Aspirin at the same time as NSAID medications.**  
STOP THE ASPIRIN: If you have any stomach irritation, bleeding in your stool or you start vomiting blood. Contact Dr. Patel's office.
  - **You are recommended to take Xarelto 10mg daily by mouth. Do not take NSAIDs at the same time as Xarelto.**
  - **Other:** \_\_\_\_\_

**You do not need to take any additional medications**

**Start medication 12 hours after surgery.**

**Duration of anticoagulant medication: 2 4 6 (circle one) weeks**

- If you are traveling after surgery, please let us know – we advise you to wait at least 1 week between travel and surgery. General tips for preventing blood clots when traveling after surgery:

1. Get up on the plane to crutch/walk every hour or if driving stop every 1-2 hours to get up and walk
2. Stay hydrated. Avoid alcohol and caffeine.
3. Wear your leg stockings
4. Take 325mg of Aspirin (unless allergic or have stomach or kidney problems) the day before travel, the day of travel and the day after travel
5. Do your exercises during travel especially ankle pumps
6. If you experience swelling in your calf or pain please call our office immediately or go to your local ED for evaluation

### **Post-operative Activity and Weight Bearing**

- Use your sling and do not put weight on your arm. You will be non-weight bearing for the 6-8 weeks on the surgical arm.
- You should do wrist exercises. Do this at least three times a day. It is okay to come out of the sling for this.

### **Cold Therapy**

- Ice should be used to help reduce pain and swelling. Ice as often as possible the first 3 days after surgery, alternating 20 minutes on with 20 minutes off during the day. After that, you should apply ice at least 3 to 5 times a day for 20 minutes each session until pain and swelling have resolved.
- When icing after your surgical dressing has been removed, do not put ice directly over healing skin. Use of a thin cloth barrier between the skin and ice is recommended.
- If you have an ice therapy device, set the device to 40-50 degrees F if possible— some machines do not have this setting. It can be used **continuously at night**.
- Usage of an ice therapy device is at your own risk. Please make sure to read all instructions prior to purchasing one or using one. If you would like to purchase one you may do so online at Amazon.com and search “Cryotherapy”.

### **Pain Medication**

- Take your pain medication as prescribed. This usually means 1 tablet every 4 hours for mild pain or 2 tablets every 4-6 hours for severe pain. Do not take any additional Tylenol.
- You can also use over-the-counter non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS) once you are eating well. They will help reduce pain, swelling, and stiffness.
  - Recommended: Aleve, 1 to 2 tablets every 12 hours; or Ibuprofen, 400 to 800 mg every 6 to 8 hours. Eat something prior to taking the medication. If you develop stomach burning or severe GI upset, discontinue the medication.
  - \*Do not take NSAIDS if you have a history of kidney, liver, or stomach ulcer disease, or bleeding disorders, or if you are taking Celebrex, Bextra, or blood thinners like Coumadin.
- The pain medication may also cause constipation if you take it regularly, so take the prescribed stool softener as needed. Over the counter treatments include: stool softener, fiber bar, Metamucil or prune juice to prevent constipation.
- No driving while taking any narcotic pain medication.
- The pain medication may cause some nausea so take it with some food.

**Your prescriptions will be sent electronically to your pharmacy today. Please pick up prescriptions prior to the day of surgery.**

### **Bone Health**

- While fractures can happen for a variety of reasons, sub-optimal bone health can be a risk factor. Taking Vitamin D during the duration of your treatment may promote fracture healing. Thus, we will want you to take 1,000iu of Vitamin D daily for the next 3 months. Depending on your age, medical history, and type of fracture we may want you to take 50,000iu of Vitamin D on a weekly basis. If we want you to take 50,000iu of Vitamin D we will provide a prescription of for you, if you have not received it please let us know. You can begin taking this medication before surgery if you would like. You will stay on it for a minimum 3 months after surgery. Your diet should also contain a healthy amount of Calcium (~800mg Daily). If you are on any medications for osteoporosis then please discuss this with the PA/Dr.Patel or your primary care physician.
- You should schedule an appointment with your primary care doctor and ask about checking your blood Vitamin D levels as well as possible Bone Density Testing (DEXA scan)

### **Notify the Office if you Experience the Following**

- Flu-like symptoms, nausea/vomiting, temperature of 101.5 degrees or higher, severe chills; foul odor, redness, or increased tenderness or drainage from the incision. These are signs of a possible infection. You may need to report to an Emergency Room.
- Hot tender area or unusually large amounts of swelling in either calf or other area of the leg; chest pain, shortness of breath or coughing up blood. These are signs of a possible blood clot and you may need to report to an Emergency Room or call an ambulance.
- Progressively worsening pain unresponsive to pain medication, blue toes, and persistent numbness and tingling in your toes may indicate Compartment Syndrome. Loosen any dressing, elevate the extremity and call the office, if during normal business hours or go to the nearest emergency room.
- **For urgent problems** that occur during office hours (office hours, Monday - Friday, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm), call Dr. Patel's office directly (630) 920-2350 or report to an emergency room. After hours, call (630) 920-2350 or report to an emergency room.

### **Follow-up**

- If you do not have a postoperative appointment set-up already, please call the office to schedule an appointment for 10-17 days after surgery at (630) 920-2350.

**The previous instructions will help you know what to expect in the days following your surgery. However, do not hesitate to call if you have any questions or concerns.**