

Adam Seidl, MD
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Shoulder/Elbow Surgery
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Orthopedics

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO

Highlands Ranch Hospital
(720) 516-4090
Inverness
(303) 694-3333
Anschutz Medical Campus
(720) 848-1900

General Post-Operative Instructions

Clavicle Fracture Repair

Icing

Icing is very important for the first 7-14 days after surgery. You will be given the option to rent/purchase a cooling machine – this will be arranged before surgery. For the first 3-4 days, a bag of ice or the cooling machine should be used as frequently as possible. After 4 days, ice or cooling machine is applied for 20-minute periods, at least 4 times per day. Care must always be taken to avoid frostbite – there should be a layer of clothing or a cloth/towel between the ice and skin.

Sling Use

A sling with a small pillow will be fitted and placed in the operating room and is to be worn at all times for the first 2 weeks after surgery. You may release the strap on the sling to straighten and bend the elbow 3 to 4 times per day starting the day after surgery. During the first 2 weeks, the sling may be completely removed only for showering and to perform your shoulder exercises. After 2 weeks, the sling can be removed at all times.

Physical Therapy

Physical therapy is to be scheduled to start 2 weeks after surgery. It is important to select your physical therapy location and call ahead of time to setup an appointment as many physical therapy locations are scheduled out for 1-2 weeks. Below are phone numbers to schedule at a UCHealth facility if desired:

Lone Tree: (720) 848-2200

Inverness: (303) 694-3333

Aurora (University of Colorado Anschutz Campus): (720) 848-2000

Stapleton: (720) 848-2000

Sports Medicine Center (Colorado and I-25): (720) 848-2000

Sterling Ranch: (303) 265-3380

Boulder: (720) 848-2000

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If these locations are not convenient or you would like to go to an outside physical therapy center you may do so. You will be provided a prescription for physical therapy and a rehabilitation protocol at your first post-operative appointment. Again, you are encouraged to call before or soon after surgery and schedule an appointment to start 2 weeks after surgery.

Incision Care

After surgery, you will have a clear waterproof dressing on your incision. This will stay in place until I remove it at your first post-operative appointment (10-14 days). You may shower immediately after surgery with the dressing in place. Upon completion of your shower, pat dry the dressing/incision with a clean towel – do not rub. DO NOT get into a bathtub, pool, or spa until you are seen in clinic and it is determined that your incision is completely healed (typically 4-6 weeks). Always wash your hands before touching your dressing/incision. DO NOT use any creams or ointments on your incision.

Please contact my office immediately if you notice any of the following as these could be a sign of an infection:

1. Excessive fluid leaking from the incisions after 3 days
2. A foul odor from the incisions
3. Any redness or warmth around the incisions
4. Significant increase in pain.

In addition, please check your temperature if you begin to feel ill, warm, or if you have chills. Contact my office immediately if your temperature is above 101.5 degrees or you think you may have an infection anywhere in your body. It is common to have a low-grade temperature within the first week of surgery. You should drink fluids and breathe deeply.

Swelling and Bruising

It is common to have swelling and/or bruising after surgery. This is caused by bleeding and is expected. The bruising may start out black-red-purple and will change to a yellowish-green color as it fades over a few weeks. The bruising may go down the arm. You may also have some swelling in your hand which should go away; squeezing a ball or making a fist repeatedly will help with this. In time, the swelling will go away.

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Discomfort

You may need help with your daily activities, so it is a good idea to have family and friends around to help you. You will have some mild to moderate shoulder discomfort. You will be provided a prescription for pain pills after the surgery. Please take your pills as directed and remember to use ice or your cooling device to help reduce pain. If you have pain that your pain pills do not take care of, please contact my office.

Nausea and Vomiting

It is common to have nausea and/or vomiting for the first 24 hours after surgery. You have been provided with a medication (Ondansetron) that will help with nausea. Please contact my office about any nausea/vomiting that does not go away. You may eat whatever you wish, however, it is suggested that you start with fluids and bland food before moving to a regular diet.

Your Medications

You should start taking all your regular medications right after surgery. If there are exceptions to this, you will be informed. If you have questions contact my office.

Blood Clots

Surgery may slow the blood flow in your legs, which might (rarely) cause a blood clot to form in the leg. If a clot were to form, the leg is usually painful and swollen. Blood clots can be serious and, if you have one, you will need to go to the hospital. Walking regularly early after surgery can prevent blood clots. Moving the ankle frequently and rising up on your toes can lower the risk of this problem. If you are not already on a blood thinner, I would like you to take a full-strength Aspirin (325mg) once daily for 3 weeks - this can help prevent a blood clot. If you were taking a blood thinner before surgery, I will let you know when you can start taking this again after surgery (most often the day after surgery).

Please contact your doctor right away if:

You have swelling, tenderness, pain, warmth or redness in your thigh, calf, or ankle.

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Call 911 if you have signs that might mean a blood clot that has moved to your lungs:

- Chest Pain
- Trouble Breathing
- Rapid Breathing
- Sweating
- Confusion