

Plastic Hand Surgery Pain Management and Post-Operative Instructions

How will I feel after surgery?

Due to local/regional anesthetic used during your procedure, you may experience numbness for 4 hours and for up to 24 hours after surgery.

What should my activity level be?

- After surgery, some swelling or bruising is expected. Use elevation to control swelling. **This means letting the hand rest and keeping the hand that was operated on above the level of your heart as much as possible for the first 3 days.**
- Avoid strenuous exercise for at least 3 days as this can increase swelling.
- You can use ice for 10-15 minutes at a time, every hour - up to 8-10 times throughout the day for the first 3 days after surgery. Icing will help with pain, inflammation and swelling.

How do I take care of my dressings?

If you are in a splint, do not remove it. It is designed to remain in place until your post-operative visit. The medical staff will remove it for you. Only move the parts of the hand that are not covered by the cast material. Turn to page 5 of this handout to see a picture showing how to sleep with a splint.

- If you have a soft dressing (no cast or splint), you may remove the dressing after 3 days. **Leave the steri-strips in place if you have them.** You may wash the area daily with mild soap and water and apply a fresh dressing daily.

How much pain should I expect?

After having surgery, it is expected that you will experience some pain, even with pain medication. This is a normal part of recovery. Our goal is to manage your pain so that you are still able to do your daily routines and sleep.

- Surgical pain for most major procedures typically lasts 48-72 hours. This is called acute pain.
- Acute pain management for minor procedures should always start with over-the-counter pain medications, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil). If your surgeon approves these medications, you should take them as directed on the pill bottles, or by your surgeon.
- For severe pain, you may take your prescription opioid (narcotic). **Do not take more opioid pills, or more often, than prescribed by your surgeon.**
- It is important that as your pain gets better, you should wait longer in between opioid doses, take less opioids, and return to using over-the-counter medications.
- Do not take your opioids for **any reason** other than your surgical pain.
- If you no longer have severe pain, you do **not** have to take your opioids and can start using the over-the-counter medications again if needed. Do not drive or **drink alcohol** while you are taking opioids.
- Do not use opioids with benzodiazepines, sleeping medications or other depressants. If you have any questions, ask your surgeon or any pharmacist, before using these medications together as they can increase your risk of an accidental overdose.

How do I manage prescription refills?

- We encourage stopping the opioids as soon as possible and using only over the counter pain medications. but, if you believe you need a refill, please call our clinic. We can be reached at (734) 998-6022 between 8:00am - 4:30pm, or contact us through the Patient Portal. Messages received afterhours, or on the weekend, will be answered on the next business day.
- Please allow one business day to have your request reviewed.

When should I call my doctor?

Call your doctor if you have any of the following:

- Severe or increased pain not relieved by medication.
- Any side effects to medications such as, rash, nausea, vomiting, headache, or constipation.
- Oral temperature over 100.4 degrees.
- Dressing that seems too tight.
- Dressing or splint that gets wet or if your splint breaks.
- Any signs of an infection:
 - Redness of the incision or wound with red streaks up the arm.
 - Unexpected drainage from the incision or wound.
 - Pain gets worse over time instead of better.

How do I safely store my opioid pain medications while I am taking them for my surgical pain?

- Lock your pills up if possible
- Try to keep a count of how many pills you have left after each dose.
- Do not store your opioids in places that allow easy access to others (for example: bathrooms, kitchens, etc.)
- Do not share your opioids with anyone else. Diversion (selling or sharing) of opioids is a felony under Michigan law.

How do I safely dispose of leftover opioid pain medications?

The safest way to dispose of old medications is to take them to an authorized take-back program or collection site in your area. Take-back programs are available at many local police stations and pharmacies. All state police posts in Michigan will take back unused medications. Special take-back events are also scheduled in many communities.

- To find a take-back location use the interactive Opioid Disposal Map at:

<http://michigan-open.org/takebackmap/>

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- Visit <http://michmed.org/MmA6N> to learn how to dispose of medications if a Take-back program is not available in your area

Whom should I call if I have questions?

- (734) 998 - 6022 Monday - Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
- After hours and on weekends, call Hospital Paging at (734) 936-6267 and ask for the Plastic Surgeon on call.

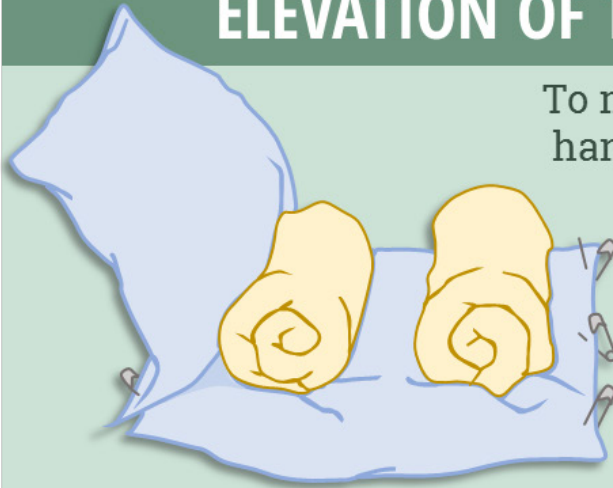
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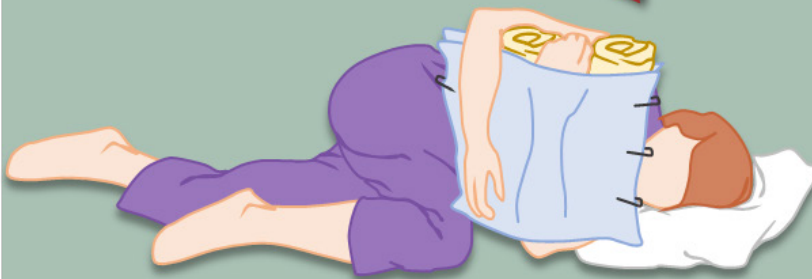
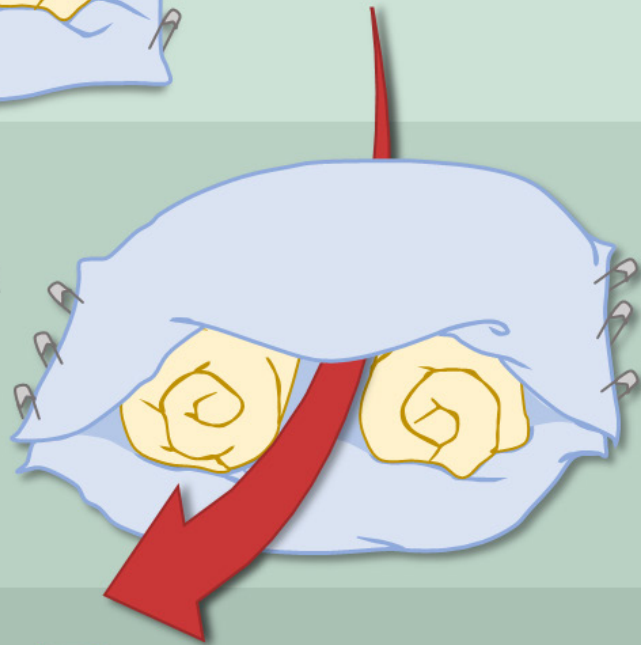
ELEVATION OF THE HAND

To maintain elevation of the hand while sleeping use:

- 2 standard sized pillows
- 6 or 8 large safety pins
- 2 rolled up bath towels



The forearm is placed between the bath towels inside the two pillows.



You will be able to sleep on your side, hugging the pillows, or on your back.

