

# How to Care for Myself After Shoulder Surgery

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## Dressing:

- Keep your dressing clean and dry.
- Your dressings include sutures for skin closure, Steri-Strips™, gauze and tape.
- Steri-Strips™ look like white tape and are placed right over the incisions. Your surgeon will remove these in the office.

## Movement:

- Continue to wear the sling or immobilizer at all times.
- Do not move the shoulder until instructed by your surgeon.

## Showering:

- After 48-72 hours you may remove the dressing and sling to shower. **Do not** use your surgical arm in the shower; instead rest the palm of your hand against your belly while you are out of the sling. **Do not** take a bath or submerge in water.
- **Do not** shower if your incisions are draining. Call MedSport if you see drainage.
- Steri-Strips™ may get wet with running water, but do not soak or scrub them.
- After showering, you may cover your incision with fresh gauze or leave it open to air.
- Your stitches will be removed at MedSport 10 to 14 days after surgery.

## **Icing:**

- Continue to use ice as long as you have pain or swelling.
- Your surgeon may have applied an ice device at the time of surgery. If so, please follow printed instructions for use. You **do not** need to bring the ice device back to MedSport.
- If you use a regular ice pack, leave it on for 20 minutes every hour as often as needed.

## **Positioning:**

- You may be more comfortable sleeping sitting upright or in a reclining chair for the first few nights after surgery.
- Placing a pillow under your elbow to help support your shoulder may help to decrease your pain.

## **Exercise:**

- Continue to wear the sling at all times, removing it only during your shower, until your next visit to MedSport.
- Avoid exercising or strenuous activities until you are seen at MedSport.
- On the surgical side you may move your **fingers and wrist only** until you're evaluated and receive further instructions at MedSport.
- You may move your neck from side to side and front to back.

## **Diet:**

- You may want to eat smaller meals for the first 24 hours after surgery to prevent nausea.
- You may progress to your normal diet when you feel ready.
- A high fiber diet will help prevent constipation.
- Drink plenty of fluids.

## **Pain control:**

### **Magnesium:**

- You received a prescription for magnesium to help with your pain relief.  
Take 1 tablet a day while you're taking the narcotic pain medicine.
- Stop taking magnesium if you get loose or runny stools.

### **Opioids and over-the-counter (OTC) pain medications:**

You received a prescription for an opioid pain medication (narcotic) today. Take the medication as your doctor prescribed.

- You may begin taking an OTC stool softener to prevent constipation while you are taking the opioid pain medications

Taper off of the opioid as your pain decreases. Tapering means taking the medication less frequently than what your doctor prescribed, until you stop taking the medication all together. To reduce pain and help you taper off the opioid, you can take acetaminophen (Tylenol®) in addition to the opioid, but **you must** make sure you do not exceed the maximum dosage of acetaminophen allowed per day. Check the ingredients of opioid pain medication to see if it contains acetaminophen.

- If your opioid pain medication **does not** contain acetaminophen, you may take it in addition to the prescribed opioid medication (up to 3,000mg per a 24-hour time period)
- If your opioid pain medication contains acetaminophen, add the amount of acetaminophen in your prescription to the amount you are taking with the OTC medication. Make sure you **do not exceed** 3,000mg or 3 grams of acetaminophen in a 24-hour time period.

### **NSAIDs: (Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs):**

- While you are taking aspirin avoid taking OTC anti-inflammatory NSAIDs like ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®, or Naproxen®).

- Ask your surgeon if you may begin NSAIDs at your first clinic appointment.

### **When do I need to call the doctor?**

- ✓ chest pain
- ✓ difficulty breathing
- ✓ calf pain
- ✓ fever above 100.6 degrees Fahrenheit
- ✓ intense itching or rash
- ✓ prolonged nausea
- ✓ excessive swelling or bleeding
- ✓ draining incisions after 48-72hrs.
- ✓ redness or sign of a wound infection

### **How do I contact my doctor?**

- Monday-Friday from 8:00am-5:00pm call MedSport (734) 930-7400, choose option 1.
- At night, weekends, or holidays call the University Hospital Operator (734) 936-6267 ask for the **Orthopedic Surgery Resident** on-call.

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