

Post Operative Instructions  
Arthroscopic Rotator Cuff Repair  
Jason Browdy, M.D.

You have just had an arthroscopic rotator cuff repair. Following these guidelines should give you the best chance for a quick recovery.

- Diet:** Advance to solid food as tolerated.
- Bandages:** Unless told otherwise, you may remove your dressings 48 hours after surgery and place Band-Aids or gauze over the incisions. Change the Band-Aids or gauze daily until there is no drainage. Do not clean your incisions with peroxide, alcohol or ointments.
- Bathing/Shower:** You should keep the surgical site dry until the incision is fully healed. This generally takes 7-10 days. You should consider sponge bathing for the first 7-10 days after surgery. Once the incision is fully healed, as determined by Dr. Browdy, you may get your incision wet in the shower, but you should avoid submerging under water until you are four weeks out of surgery.
- Activity:** If you had a rotator cuff repair, you will likely leave the surgery center or hospital with a sling and a small pillow that keeps the arm slightly off your side. The purpose of this pillow is to reduce tension on your repaired rotator cuff. Please stay in your sling and keep the pillow on your side until you are seen in the office. You may remove both the sling and pillow during bathing and on occasion to move your elbow and wrist. You may move your hand and wrist as tolerated. Please remember that active motion of the operated shoulder soon after surgery can jeopardize the repair. **So, please do not actively move your shoulder.**
- Medications:** Many patients elect to have a "block" prior to surgery to help with post-operative pain relief. This block provides significant pain relief in the early post-operative period, but it will wear off 12-24 hours after surgery. Your arm will likely remain weak for the duration of the nerve block.

**Medications (cont.):**

You will be prescribed two narcotic pain medications to help with control the pain you might experience after the block wears off. It is very important to "stay ahead" of the pain by taking the medication prior to the onset of severe pain. We recommend using oxycodone for a maximum of 48 hours. Take your first dose before bed time the night of surgery. If you start to regain sensation in the hand or fingers before bed time, it is advisable to take your pain medicine - **do not wait until you hurt to take your pain medicine**. You should switch to hydrocodone on the third day after surgery.

Pain medicine can cause nausea, so take the medication with food. You may be given a prescription to deal with nausea. You do not need to fill this prescription, but you should keep it handy in the event you need it.

Unless advised otherwise, please start taking a full Aspirin a day after surgery for three weeks to help minimize the risk of a blood clot. If you cannot tolerate taking Aspirin, please notify Dr. Browdy and his staff.

**Comfort Measures:**

As part of the recovery process following surgery, Dr. Browdy highly encourages his patients to use a motorized cold therapy machine (a.k.a. cryo unit). The unit is beneficial for the entire post-operative course by reducing pain and swelling during recovery and throughout physical therapy treatment. The machine will give 6-8 hours of continuous cold therapy to the affected body part. If you elect not use a cryo unit, you may use a large bag of ice. In either case, keeping the shoulder cool will help significantly reduce swelling and pain. If you have an ice machine with a thermostat, do not let the temperature go below 45 degrees, as frostbite can occur.

When sleeping or resting, you may find it more comfortable to use a reclining chair and a pillow under the forearm for support rather than lying in a bed. This is optional.

**Problems:**

Your shoulder may have swelling and soreness for the first several days. This is to be expected. You may also notice some bruising around the shoulder and chest wall.

It is not uncommon for the hand to experience slight swelling and/or numbness or tingling in the hand. This can be in part due to constriction of the wrist by your sling, and removing the sling periodically can help. The sensation can last up to a few months, but subsides with time.

**Problems (cont.):**

Please contact Dr. Browdy's office if you have any of the following:

1. Severe Pain
2. A Temperature above 101 degrees
3. Pain, redness or significant swelling in your knee or calf (bruising may occur, and in many cases is normal).

Please call us if you have **any** questions.

**Appointments:**

You will need to see Dr. Browdy for a follow-up appointment about a week after surgery. Please call the office at 314-991-2150 to make an appointment.

**Phone Numbers:**

Motion Orthopaedics: 314-991-2150

For any urgent need after normal business hours or on weekends you may call the after hours line at 1-888-456-8166.

**Medication  
Refill Policy:**

**It is the policy of Motion Orthopaedics that narcotic medications will only be refilled during office hours. Please be patient with the office staff. If you call during patient hours, your call may be returned at the end of the day.**