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SHOULDER ARTHROSCOPY INSTRUCTION SHEET

You just had arthroscopic shoulder surgery. The surgery is now over and your recovery begins. It is important to understand that your recovery and your rehabilitation are just as important to your outcome as the surgery. The post-operative instructions are meant to protect the shoulder during this healing time. It is important to remember that although the external incisions are small, the interior structures take 6-8 weeks to heal and quiet down. Overuse of your shoulder during this period can compromise your results.

SWELLING: Arthroscopy involves filling the shoulder with fluid. You can expect swelling in the shoulder and drainage from the incisions for several days. This will gradually improve over the first 2 weeks.

ICE: This is most important for the first few days. Ice will help keep the post-operative swelling to a minimum and will assist in pain control. You can either use an ice unit or ice bags. Ice bags can be made from plastic bags, but should not be applied directly to the skin. Placing a towel between the ice bag and your skin is recommended.

POST-OPERATIVE PAIN: Post-operative pain can be quite variable. It is not unusual to have severe pain. If you elected to have a nerve block, the onset of pain will be delayed for several hours. You will receive a prescription for pain medication. It should be taken as needed; however, it would be better to stay ahead of the pain by taking some **before** the block completely wears off. Most people require the medication for 5-7 days and then gradually wean off the medication, taking it only before bed for several more days. Ice can be very helpful to limit the pain after surgery. You may be more comfortable sleeping in a reclining chair for a while after surgery.

DRESSINGS: You should remove the dressings in 2 days. Cover the incisions with Band-Aids. If you have steri-strips on an incision, leave them intact and cover the entire incision with a large Band-Aid. Change the Band-Aids daily until your follow-up appointment. You may shower 2 days after the incisions have completely stopped draining.

ACTIVITY: You will be placed into a sling after surgery. You may wean out of your sling as tolerated **unless otherwise directed by your doctor**. If you had a tendon repair or a labral repair, you will need to remain in the sling longer. You should begin the pendulum exercises in 2 days **unless otherwise directed by your doctor**. This is done by removing the sling, leaning over, and dangling your arm. Swing it side to side, forward and backward, and around in circles. This should be done 5 times a day for 5 minutes at a time. You should also begin shoulder shrugs. To prevent stiffness in the other joints of your arm, you should begin hand, wrist, and elbow range of motion exercises. You may drop your elbow out of the sling and straighten your elbow to do these exercises.

REHABILITATION: Depending on your surgery, physical therapy will begin approximately 2 weeks after your surgery. Often you will receive a rehabilitation protocol to bring to the therapist. You may want to keep a copy for yourself so that you can monitor your progress. Follow the instructions outlined on the protocol. You will receive this protocol at your first post-operative follow-up visit.

OFFICE CHECK-UP: A follow-up appointment should have been scheduled for approximately 8-13 days after your surgery. This appointment is usually made when your surgery was scheduled. If this is not already scheduled, please call the office to schedule this. You should contact us if you have a persistent temperature above 101.5 degrees, marked redness, or continued drainage. Please call if you have any questions or concerns. Our office phone is always answered: (616) 396-5855. Although surgery is never a pleasant experience, our goal is to help you through this process with care and compassion.