

Hand and Upper Extremity Surgery: Post-op Care General Instructions



Eating and Drinking

Gradually resume your normal diet. The night of your surgery, begin with liquids and/or light foods. If you are feeling well enough in the morning, progress to your normal eating patterns. Eating a well-balanced diet with plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables and drinking plenty of fluids may help alleviate constipation resulting from pain medication.

Smoking and Smokeless Tobacco

Tobacco use (smoking and all other forms) can interfere with wound and fracture healing and may increase your pain levels. **DO NOT** smoke post-operatively. Please contact your surgeon's office for a referral to the smoking cessation program.

Call 216-778-HAND (4263)
Comprehensive Hand and Upper
Extremity Service if you have any
questions.



MyChart
metrohealth.org/mychart

Dressing/Showering

You may shower as soon as you would like after surgery. If you have a dressing, cover it with a plastic bag to avoid getting it wet. If you have a dressing or splint, your doctor will instruct you how to care for it after surgery.

Ice & Elevate

The use of ice after your surgery will help both with pain control and swelling. You should continue to use ice for the first 48 hours and then on an as-needed basis. Elevate the surgical site above the level of the heart on pillows as much as possible for the first 48 hours after surgery. This will help keep the swelling to a minimum and prevent throbbing and pain.



Pain Medication

If you have received a nerve block, your arm and hand may be numb for 6-24 hours. You may be provided an oral pain medication prescription (narcotic and/or NSAIDs).

Rest and elevation are some of the most crucial factors for pain control. Take your pain medication as directed even if the pain is minimal with the block; do not wait for the pain to become out of control. The most severe pain occurs as the block wears off.

Even if you are not having pain but feel your arm/hand “waking up”, take your pain medication so that it will be working when needed. Pain medication may cause some tiredness, nausea or constipation. If these symptoms become significant, contact your surgeon’s office and discontinue the medication.



Avoid alcohol and driving while using narcotic pain medication.

Unless otherwise directed, you may take over the counter medications such as Tylenol or anti-inflammatory (NSAIDs) medications (Ibuprofen, Naproxen, etc.) as directed on the label. If you have a medical contraindication to taking NSAIDs, please consult your primary care doctor for advice.

Driving

It is not advisable to drive a vehicle while you are taking narcotic pain medications due to the possible side effects of sleepiness and dizziness. Once you are no longer taking pain medications, not in a splint/cast/sling and you can safely control a vehicle in an emergency situation, you may drive.



Warning signs

Observe your dressing and incision site for increased redness, swelling, drainage, foul odor or increased severe pain unrelieved by rest or pain medications. If any of the above occurs or if you develop a fever higher than 101 degrees, please notify your surgeon’s office at **216-778-HAND** immediately.

After 5 p.m. on weekdays or on 5 p.m. on weekdays or on weekends or holidays, please call the MetroHealth nurse line at 216-778 and ask for the Ortho resident on call.

For emergencies call 911.