UPPER EXTREMITY SURGERY

POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

General Instructions

- Apply an ice pack to hand/elbow for the next 72 hours. You can use a commercially available ice pack or a bag of frozen peas or corn works just as well-just cover with a towel. Use for 15 minutes at a time, 3 times a day.
- Bruising may appear on your arm/fingers and swelling may occur down to your hand- this is normal.
- If you have an upset stomach, take only cool clear liquids such as Gatorade, Jell-O, Ginger Ale or popsicles. If nausea persists and you are unable to keep down any liquids after the first night of surgery, please contact my office.
- Low-grade fevers (less than 101 F) are common after surgery. These fevers should go away a few days after surgery as you start to move around more. If your fever persists for more than a few days, or your wounds have a large area of redness around them (more than a few the size of a quarter), contact my office.
- For the first 48 hours after surgery, inhale deeply and hold your breath for 3 seconds, then exhale completely. Repeat 10 times, 4 times daily.
- If you smoke, avoid cigarettes for 48 hours after surgery. This might be a good time to consider stopping smoking altogether!
- Any prescriptions you are given after surgery should be filled immediately and taken according to the directions on the label.

The pain medications given to you can frequently cause: constipation, fatigue, nausea, and itching. (If you feel you are likely to be constipated, you may take a stool softener such as Metamucil or Citrucel). For these reasons, we recommend that you try to switch to an anti-inflammatory medicine (“NSAID”) and Tylenol for pain relief as soon as possible. NSAID’s include ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil, generic) and naproxen (Aleve) – take only one type of these with meals. Take them only if you have been able to tolerate them in the past and do not have any stomach or kidney problems.
**Exercises**

- Elevation of the hand/elbow is the best way to avoid swelling and stiffness. Elevate your hand/elbow above the level of your heart for the first 2-3 days after surgery. Your hand is not elevated when it is in the sling.
- If you were given a sling after your surgery, this is for comfort only. Remove the sling to move your shoulder in all directions, several times a day.
- Keep your fingers supple by flexing and extending them as much as your splint will allow.
- If your elbow is not immobilized in a splint, then flex and extend your elbow as much as pain will allow. Do this several times a day.

**Bandages**

- Your bandage may show blood stains within 1-12 hours after surgery. This is not cause for concern. Do not try to remove the dressing/splint- they will be removed in the office at your first post-operative visit. If the dressings are soaked with blood within the first day or two after surgery (dark red, as opposed to pink fluid) call my office.
- **Keep your dressing/splint dry.** Place your arm in a garbage bag while showering, or better yet take baths with your arm completely out of the water.

**Work**

- Your comfort level should be your guide for return to work. We will discuss your return to work status at your first post-operative visit.
- You should not use your arm/hand for any activities.

**Important**

- Report any complications to my office immediately. This includes excessive bleeding, wound breakdown, redness around wounds, uncontrolled pain, or a fever over 101.
- Eat a balanced diet and get plenty of rest.

*IF THERE ARE ANY QUESTIONS, please call the office for further instructions: 827-2480 from 8a.m. until 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. After hours, or weekends for an emergency call: 220-4493.*