



Zachary R. Zimmer, MD
Assistant Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery
George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences

Post-Operative Protocol: Anatomic Total Shoulder Arthroplasty

Dressings:

- Your incision is covered by a Telfa dressing secured with a Tegaderm.
- The dressings may be removed 5 days after surgery.
- Do not shower until the dressings are removed. Once the dressings are removed, you may shower. Do not scrub your incision; rather, just let water run over the incision.
- The sutures are under the skin and absorbable, so there are no stitches that need to be removed. The incision was further sealed with a skin glue, which is purple. This will eventually peel off on its own; do not pick at the incision.

Sling:

- You will be in a sling for at least 4 weeks.
- You may come out of your sling to shower. When doing so, use your other hand to support the operative arm and keep across your belly.
- You may also come out of your sling to do pendulum exercises. These are done by bending 90 degrees at the waist, letting your arm dangle with the assistance of gravity, and slowly moving your arm in gentle circles. Do this in both clockwise and counterclockwise directions. Do this a few times a day.
- When sitting on the couch or a chair, you may remove your sling to work on moving your elbow, wrist and hand. This will help prevent stiffness.

Post-Operative Pain Management:

- You will be prescribed a combination of opioid pain medication and Tylenol to help control your pain. It is critical to use the opioid pain medication only as needed and to begin to wean as soon as you are able.
- Tylenol can be taken at the same time as the opioid pain medication.
- Ice can be extremely helpful with post-operative pain management – it helps reduce pain and swelling that occurs after surgery. When placing ice over your shoulder, make sure the ice is not placed directly onto your skin (ie, use a towel or other cloth). In the first few days, ice for 30 minutes and then remove the ice for 30 minutes and then repeat.

Post-Operative Medications:

- Oxycodone 5 mg – Take one tablet every 4-6 hours as needed for pain
- Tylenol 325 mg - Take 2 tablets every 6 hours as needed for pain
- Aspirin 325 mg – Take one tablet once a day for 4 weeks
- Colace (docusate sodium) 100 mg – Take one tablet every 12 hours as needed for constipation
- Zofran (ondansetron) 4 mg – Take one tablet every 8 hours as needed for nausea

Post-Operative Physical Therapy

- At your first post-operative visit, you will receive a copy of your operative note for your records. Within the operative note will be your individualized physical therapy protocol. Be sure to bring your copy of your operative report to your therapist so the therapist is aware of the proper protocol.
- You will not begin physical therapy until after your first post-operative visit. Physical therapy will initially work on range of motion exercises.

Questions/Concerns

- If you develop any of the following signs or symptoms, you should call our office immediately:
 - Increased or uncontrollable pain
 - Redness, increased swelling, or wound drainage
 - Temperature greater than 101.5°F
 - Uncontrollable nausea or vomiting
 - Prolonged constipation or difficulty urinating
- During office hours, call 202-677-6897. After hours or on the weekend, call 202-741-3300