



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

### Post-Operative Protocol: Shoulder Arthroscopic Rotator Cuff Repair

#### Dressings:

- Your incisions are covered by steristrips, gauze and an ABD pad and secured with a foam tape.
- The bulky dressings may be removed 3 days after surgery. However, do not remove the steristrips. These will stay in place until they fall off on their own or are removed during your first post-operative visit.
- Do not shower until the dressings are removed. You may sponge bathe until the dressings are removed.
- Once the dressings are removed, you may shower. Do not scrub your incisions; rather, just let water run over the incisions.
- The sutures are under the skin and absorbable, so there are no stitches that need to be removed.

#### Sling:

- You will remain in the sling for 6 weeks or longer, depending upon the surgical repair. During this time, you may remove your sling to shower but should keep your arm against your belly when out of the sling.
- When you are sitting in a chair or on the couch, you may open the sling to work on elbow, wrist and hand range of motion so that you do not get stiff. Do not perform any movements with your arm that will move your shoulder in order to protect the repair.

#### 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

- While you remain in the sling, you will not do any formal physical therapy. This is to protect the repair and allow the tissues to heal.
- 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. Once you do begin therapy (at or around 6 weeks after surgery or later), be sure to bring your copy of your operative report to your therapist so the therapist is aware of the proper protocol.

#### Questions/Concerns

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