

Dr. Christoforou

HAND & UPPER EXTREMITY SURGERY

POST-OPERATIVE PROTOCOL

The first 24 hours

Local anesthetic has been injected around the site of operation and therefore this area and the nearby fingers will remain numb for up to ten hours after surgery. As this effect wears off, take the prescribed pain-killers as directed. Ice pack 20 minutes at a time over the surgical site may also decrease pain and swelling during the first evening. You will be given a prescription for pain medication to take as needed.

Hand elevation is important to prevent swelling and stiffness of the fingers. Please remember not to walk with your hand dangling, or to sit with your hand held in your lap. It is fine, however, to lower your hand for light use and you should get back to normal light activities as soon as possible as guided by comfort.

The first 4 days

During this time, you should elevate and rest your hand as much as possible. You are encouraged to move your fingers and wrist, but it may cause some pain. Light typing or writing for no more than five minutes at a time is allowed, but if it causes pain you should discontinue. You may not lift objects at all with your surgical hand. You will have some swelling in your fingers, but as long as you can move them without severe pain, this is normal.

The 5th day until your 1st follow-up visit

Dr. Christoforou will instruct you when you are able to remove the dressing. IN MOST CIRCUMSTANCES, DRESSING IS NOT REMOVED TILL YOU SEE HIM at the first postoperative visit.

You should continue to move your fingers and gently try to open and close your hand during this time. Movement of the wrist is also encouraged. You may type and write for up to 15 minutes at a time with low speed, but you should discontinue if your pain increases. You should still avoid lifting any objects or tight grasp during this time.

You should call my office if you have progressively worsening pain that is not relieved by icing, rest, elevation, and your prescription pain medication. You should also call if you have a persistent fever of greater than 101 °F.

Diet: Regular diet as tolerated.

Medications: Pain medication is prescribed and should be taken as needed. You may add Ibuprofen to the pain medication if needed. IF you had a Block for surgery (arm is numbered with an injection) then expect up to 24 hours for the numbness to resolve.

The 1st follow-up visit

At this visit, I will check your wound. If it has healed, the stitches will be removed. I will also check your sensation and range of motion. If you have significant stiffness, I may send you to occupational (hand) therapy for a few weeks. Otherwise, I will show you some simple exercises and progress your activity. Light lifting is allowed however depending on your surgical procedure, additional instructions will be given.

If you haven't already, you may now get the wound wet, but you should not scrub it. Simply pat it dry with a towel when you are done washing. You can leave the wound uncovered as long as it is in a clean, safe environment. Scar management treatments may be started after 2 weeks.

The 2nd follow-up visit

I will see you again in the office at about 4-6 weeks after surgery. If you have regained full sensation and range of motion, I will teach you some strengthening exercises. You may progress your activity and return to normal use of the arm over this time. If you are still having stiffness, numbness or pain, I will start other treatments such as medications, therapy, or splinting as indicated. Additionally, I will personalize further follow-up visits to meet your needs.

For questions during post-operative period, please reach us at: Phone (631) 689-6698

Dimitrios Christoforou, MD

The patient and/or family member has been instructed and given a copy of these recommendations.

Patient/Family Member Signature

Nurse Signature