

Dr. Yildirim's Post-Operative Instructions – Elbow Surgery

Dressing & Incision Care

- You have a bulky dressing on your elbow. Keep the dressing dry.
- **Remove the dressing in 4 days.**
- After removal, gently clean the incision with **soap and water only**. Pat dry and cover with a **dry, non-adherent bandage**.
- A thin layer of Vaseline (petroleum jelly) can help with scarring. **Do NOT use antibiotic ointments** like Neosporin or Bacitracin.
- **Do NOT soak** your incision in a bath, pool, or sink.
- If you have **Steri-Strips or skin glue**, do not scrub or pick at them. Let them fall off naturally, usually within 7-14 days.

Showering

- First 4 days: You may shower if the dressing stays dry (cover it with a waterproof bag).
- After 4 days: Let water run over the incision, then pat dry and apply a clean bandage.

Movement & Activity

- If your fingers are not in the dressing, start moving them right away.
- Do not lift, push, or pull with your operative hand until your follow-up visit.
- If you received a nerve block, you may remove the sling once the block fully wears off.
- Return to work depends on job demands. Many patients can return to light, non-hand-dependent work within a few days. Jobs requiring lifting or manual labor usually require more time.
- **Movement of the hand is good. Using it for tasks is not.**

Ice & Elevation

- Ice and elevation help control both pain and swelling.
- Keep your hand **elevated above heart level** as much as possible for the first 2 weeks.
- Apply ice for **20 minutes at a time**, several times a day. Keep the dressing dry.

Pain Control

- If you received a nerve block, your arm/hand may remain numb for **6–24 hours**.
- Pain is often most severe right after the block wears off.
- If your hand is starting to “wake up,” you may start taking pain medication proactively, so it is effective when needed.
- **Rest, ice, and elevation** remain the most important tools for pain control.



Commonly prescribed pain medications:

Methylprednisolone (Medrol Dose Pack): Take as directed for the full 6-day taper, starting the night of surgery, even if pain is mild. On the first night of surgery, take the entire dose (all 6 tablets) at once with food. The following days can be spread out through the day as directed on the package.

Meloxicam (Mobic): Take **one tablet daily with food for 10 days**, starting the night of surgery. Continue even if you're feeling better.

Opioid medications (Tramadol, Norco, Oxycodone, etc.): Use **only as needed** for breakthrough pain. Side effects of these medications can include drowsiness, nausea, and constipation. **Avoid alcohol.** If side effects are severe, stop the medication and contact our office.

Diet

- Begin with liquids or light foods the evening after surgery.
- Resume your regular diet as tolerated the next day.
- Eating fruits, vegetables, and staying well-hydrated helps prevent constipation from pain medications.

Smoking & Tobacco

- **Do not smoke or use smokeless tobacco and nicotine products.**
- Nicotine increases the risk of wound problems, infection, delayed healing, and increases pain.

Driving

- Do not drive while taking opioid pain medication.
- When you are off opioids and feel safe controlling the vehicle, you may resume driving.

Warning Signs

Call our office if you notice:

- Drainage or foul odor from the incision
- Worsening pain not relieved by rest, ice, elevation, and medications
- Fever persistently above 101.5°F (A low-grade temperature of 99–101°F can be normal after surgery.)

Appointments

Your follow-up appointment is scheduled on: _____.

If you do not have an appointment within **2 weeks** of surgery, please call our office at **703-435-6604**.

To reach Dr. Yildirim's team: **703-239-7759** or YildirimMA@towncenterortho.com

Please contact us with any questions or concerns.