



### Follow-Up

Your first follow-up appointment may be 2-4 weeks after your surgery. If you have not already received your follow-up appointment, please call \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_.

### Questions/Concerns

If you have any questions or concerns about your recovery please call the Pan Am Clinic Recovery Room Nurses at 204-925-1549.

For an emergency/after-hours concern only, proceed to the nearest hospital's Emergency Department.

## Shoulder Care After Surgery



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# Shoulder Care After Surgery

## Wound Care

Your skin incisions will be closed with dissolvable stitches under the skin and held together with strips of sterile tape (small white strips of tape).

This tape is covered with a large sterile dressing. **Please leave the bulky dressing on your shoulder for 2-3 days.** Sometimes the incision wounds leak blood-tinged or straw-coloured fluid for up to a week. If the dressing gets wet from this, you may change it.

After **2-3 days**, you may remove the bulky dressing, but **DO NOT** remove the tape from your incisions. The tape must stay on so the incisions heal well. Please keep the tape on until your next appointment with your surgeon. If the tape falls off, do not worry. It is normal for the incisions to appear pink or slightly red. There are no stitches that need to be removed.

You may gently shower once the bulky dressing is removed. It may be best to take a bath and sponge around the area and armpit. Pat the steri-strips dry and try to keep the tape as dry as possible to prevent it from coming off. Please **DO NOT** immerse your incisions under water until your follow-up appointment with your surgeon.

## Shoulder Sling

A sling is applied to your arm in the operating room.

Please keep your hand elevated above the level of your heart as much as possible for the first 5 days after surgery. This will minimize swelling in your hand. It is often helpful to rest your hand on a pillow when sitting or

lying down. This can safely be done while wearing the sling.

You have a sling in place and the following instructions pertain to you:

### 1) Arthroscopy Only

Use sling for comfort only, and no longer than necessary (1-3 days). You may move your shoulder and use it as tolerated. [Start the exercises in the Early Postoperative Exercises Brochure.](#)

### 2) Arthroscopy & Acromioplasty/Distal Excision

As per #1 above. Sling may be necessary for 1-3 days, but only for comfort. [Start the exercises in the Early Postoperative Exercises Brochure.](#)

### 3) Arthroscopy & Anterior Stabilization/ Rotator Cuff Repair

You will wear the sling until your first appointment with your surgeon after the surgery (about 2-4 weeks). You may take the sling off for your exercises as directed, or if you are relaxing with your arm supported. You may be required to wear your sling for up to **6 weeks after surgery.**

## Pain Control

The local anaesthetic (freezing) used during your operation will wear off within 12-30 hours. It is best to start taking pain medication well before the freezing wears off. It is common for the freezing to wear off slowly and some patients have a small amount of numbness in the arm for days after surgery.

After shoulder surgery, you may experience significant pain once the freezing wears off. Pain medications are necessary for most patients. Over-the-counter medications such as Tylenol Extra Strength and Advil can be used for pain control and can be very helpful. You can find the instructions for these medications on the bottle. You will also be given a prescription for pain medication. Your pharmacist can explain how to safely use these medications.

## Ice

Some patients rent a cooling unit. Please refer to the specific guidelines for that unit.

If you DID NOT rent a cooling unit, you may use ice packs or ice bags for pain relief and to help reduce swelling.

Please ice your shoulder for only 20 minutes at a time. There must be a cloth layer between your skin and the ice (shirt, towel, etc).

## Bleeding

The shoulder is usually very swollen as sterile water is used in the shoulder during surgery. This water may leak out of the incisions for several days. It is also common for an incision to bleed several hours after surgery. A small amount of blood on your dressing is normal. If this occurs, use your other hand to apply firm pressure to the dressing/shoulder for 10 minutes (without stopping) and the bleeding should stop.

It is also normal to have bruising, swelling and slight redness of the skin, which can extend down the arm and into the hand. This may become noticeable several days after surgery and it may last for weeks.

## Physiotherapy

You will be given the Early Postoperative Shoulder Exercises to do on your own until you see your surgeon.

Please **DO NOT** attempt to raise your arm using your shoulder muscles until instructed to do so by a physiotherapist. If you need to move the arm you can use your good arm to help move your surgical arm. If physiotherapy is required, you will get a referral to a physiotherapist from the surgeon after your surgery (either in the recovery room OR **at your first appointment after surgery**). Most patients take 2-4 months off work to recover from the operation. Your return to work depends on the type of work you do. Your physiotherapist can help guide your return to work plan.

## Sleeping

Sometimes it is most comfortable to sleep in an upright position such as a recliner or propped up by pillows in bed. In addition, putting a smaller pillow under the arm for support may offer some comfort.

## Driving

Driving a motor vehicle is NOT allowed while wearing a sling. You must avoid driving until your arm is strong enough to react quickly and safely.