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Instruction Sheet following Open Reduction Internal Fixation of Distal Radius Fracture

Splint and Dressings:

The post-operative splint and dressings placed on you immediately after your surgery must stay on at all times and should be kept clean, dry, and in place. You should cover it when bathing to keep it dry. Use CAUTION when showering so as not to slip and fall. Minimize use of the arm and NEVER bear weight on or lift with the arm that was operated on at any point before your first post-operative visit. We advise that you use a sling for comfort until your first post-operative visit.

Ice and Elevation:

Keep the arm elevated as much as possible above the level of the heart to minimize swelling and decrease discomfort. You can do this by using pillows and arm rests. It is normal to have some swelling of the fingers, hand, and arm even with adequate elevation. You may ice the wrist over your dressings as much as desired for 20 minutes at a time with 20 minutes of rest between icing. You may repeat this cycle as much as you'd like. Know that icing still has a cooling effect even if you don't feel it through your dressings or splint. This will minimize swelling.

Medication:

You will be given pain medication that should be taken as prescribed. Please note that narcotic pain medication may cause constipation. Please remember to take stool softeners (Colace) when using narcotics to help reduce the chance of constipation. You should not use alcohol together with narcotic medication. Do not drive or operate complex machinery while taking narcotic medication. Please note that most narcotic pain medications have side effects that may include nausea, vomiting, sedation, and/or dizzy spells. If you experience any of these side effects to a severe extent, you should contact our office. When your pain is well controlled (2 days to 2 weeks post-op), you may transition yourself to an anti-inflammatory and Tylenol.



You should restart all of your prescription medications once discharged unless specifically instructed otherwise.

Follow-up visit:

You need to see the doctor 10-14 days following surgery for your first post-op visit. At that time, your post-operative splint and dressings will be taken off and your sutures (stitches) will be removed. You will be placed into a new removable splint before leaving the office. Call the office to arrange this appointment if it hasn't already been made.

Common Concerns:

1. Bruising and/or swelling of hand/arm will continue to develop and may change patterns as time goes on. This is caused by bleeding of the fractured bone into the area below the skin; gravity pulls the bruising downward into the fingers. Do not be alarmed by this swelling and/or bruising anywhere along the arm.
2. Numbness or tingling of the hand/arm is a result of disruption of superficial skin nerves during the procedure, or irritation to these nerves due to swelling. Most of this will resolve over time.
3. A sudden rush or feeling of fullness with pain when moving the arm is common after surgery.

Please call if:

1. Any oozing or redness of the wound, fevers (>100.3 degrees F), or chills.
2. Any difficulty breathing or heaviness in the chest.

REMEMBER - these are only guidelines for what to expect following open reduction internal fixation of a wrist fracture. If you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to call the office.