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Discharge Instructions after Ulnar Nerve Surgery

Success of the Surgery

A successful result after the surgery depends on a positive attitude and efforts by the patient to aid recovery. Your pre-operative symptoms may take weeks or months to improve fully. Many people report improvement in their arm/hand numbness in the first few weeks, although it may take longer. The incision will be at least slightly tender for weeks after the surgery.

Care of Your Incision

Your incision was closed with stitches that will dissolve. You can shower after the surgery but you should cover your bandage with a plastic bag. Keep your dressing clean and dry. After three days you may remove it and change it if you wish. Otherwise you can keep it on until your first post-operative appointment. It is important to avoid lifting anything heavier than a half-gallon of milk. Bruising and swelling is common. If you have severe pain, any problem moving your arm, or develop a fever, you should call the office.

Pain Management

A post-operative pain medication plan will be discussed in the office. Many patients may only need an NSAID medication such as ibuprofen (Motrin) or acetaminophen (Tylenol) after this surgery. If you are given a small prescription of narcotic pain medication after the surgery, it's fine to use an NSAID such as ibuprofen, or Tylenol along with the narcotic or instead of it. As your pain decreases, you should gradually decrease the narcotic medication. No refills of narcotic medications are given for small surgeries.

Activity

Keep your arm elevated, and use a sling for support for the first week.

Most people can return to work 4-6 weeks after the surgery.

Therapy

For many patients, working with an occupational therapist after the surgery can help with the recovery process. This will be discussed at your first post-operative appointment.

Diet and Medication

You can resume your regular diet and most regular medications, including aspirin, immediately after the surgery. If you are taking an anticoagulant or "blood thinner" such as warfarin (coumadin), plavix (clopidogrel), or pradaxa (dabigatran), you will be told when to restart the medication. You should then follow-up with the doctor who prescribes the anticoagulant medicine. Constipation is a common problem after spine surgery. Over the counter stimulants and stool softeners can be beneficial, along with plenty of fresh water.

Follow-Up Appointments

Your post-operative appointment should have been set up at the time of your pre-operative visit, and is usually 10-14 days after the surgery.

What to Watch For

The following symptoms may indicate a problem. You should call the office number listed below:

- Fever higher than 101°F
- Uncontrollable hand pain
- Inability to move the fingers
- Redness or drainage from the incision

For questions after the surgery, please call 401-606-6360. If you feel you have an urgent problem outside of office hours, go to the nearest Emergency Department.



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