

Note: This information is provided for general educational purposes only. Because every individual is different, these instructions will not apply to every patient. Only your doctor can tell you what is appropriate for you.

Shoulder Surgery Discharge Instructions

Patient's name: _____

Surgery Date: _____ **Surgeon's Name:** _____

Occupational Therapist: _____

Physical Therapist: _____

**More patient education resources are available at
www.shoulderphysician.net**

In the Hospital

An **occupational therapist** and/or **physical therapist** will each come to work with you on the day after your surgery. They will teach you self-care tips and range-of-motion exercises based on the rehabilitation protocol recommended by your surgeon.

We recommend that you arrange to have someone at home to help you during the first week following your stay in the hospital. Depending upon your level of mobility, a discharge planner may visit with you to make recommendations, and to arrange for assistance or any equipment you might need at home.

The day following your surgery, a therapist will:

- review shoulder precautions with you
- teach you techniques to correctly get into and out of bed
- instruct how to put the immobilizer on and take it off
- demonstrate how to correctly perform passive range of motion exercises
- teach you how to use the ice machine
- assess the need for adaptive equipment, such as a toilet riser
- determine the need for any assistive devices, such as a cane
- evaluate your balance during walking
- provide your family or caregiver with education if needed.

Shoulder Precautions

It is very important to follow shoulder precautions to minimize the chances of shoulder dislocation, and to protect the healing subscapularis muscle that was cut and repaired during your surgery.

- **Do not put weight on the surgical arm**
(Do not lean on it, lift objects with the hand, or actively use the surgical arm)
- **No active internal rotation**
(Do not pull objects toward your stomach)
- **No External Rotation beyond 20°**
(Do not roll out your shoulder beyond the specified limited range)
- **No Extension of your shoulder beyond neutral**
(Do not bring your elbow behind your body)

Shoulder Rehabilitation Protocol

- You must wear the shoulder immobilizer for the first three weeks *at all times* except during dressing, showering, and range of motion exercises.
- After three weeks you may begin to wean yourself from the sling. When not wearing the sling your arm should hang loosely by your side. You should not lift objects with your surgical arm.
- Begin your exercises the day after your surgery. You should do the exercises 5 times per day. It is necessary to do these each day for a good result!

After Discharge from Hospital:

You will need to see your doctor at 10-14 days after your surgery. At that appointment your wound will be assessed, and your shoulder range of motion tested. If your shoulder range of motion is slow to progress, you may be given a prescription to see a physical therapist for passive stretching. You will otherwise continue to do passive exercises at home for about three months before starting gentle strengthening exercises with a therapist.

Pain Control

What Can You Do To Relieve Your Pain?

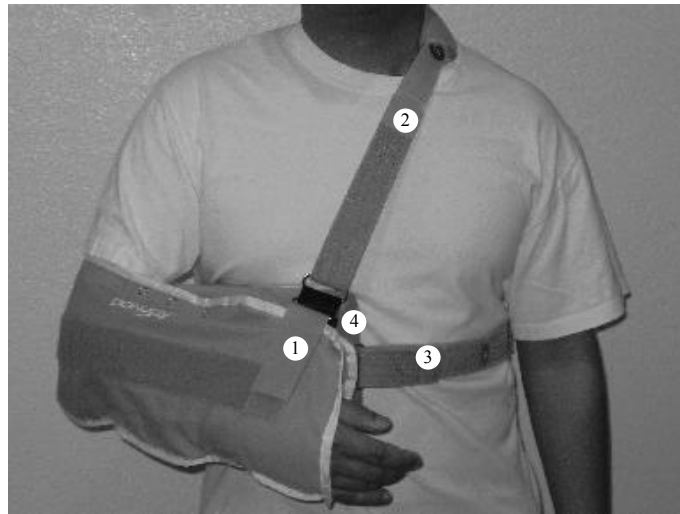
Pain is unpredictable and varies from one patient to another. Some patients may experience severe pain, while others have only minimal discomfort. It is important that your post-surgical pain is well controlled so that you will be able to tolerate normal, functional movement.

The following strategies may help you better manage your symptoms:

- Slow, deep breathing or diaphragmatic breathing
- Shoulder and whole body relaxation
- Stretches for the Head/Neck
- Pain Medications
- Ice to entire shoulder girdle
- Frequent changes in body position
- Proper positioning of your shoulder
- Short walks

How to Safely Use Your Shoulder Immobilizer

It is important to follow the shoulder precautions listed on page 2 when putting on and taking off your sling.



(1) Lower arm strap (2) Shoulder strap (3) Waist strap (4) Abductor Pillow

Taking the Shoulder Immobilizer Off:

- Loosen the Velcro on the shoulder strap (2).
- Use the unaffected hand to pull the shoulder strap over the head
- Unfasten the waist strap (3).
- Unfasten the lower arm strap (1) and undo the snaps.
- Straighten your elbow and keep your arm supported on your lap or a pillow beside you.
- The abductor pillow (4) can be separated from the sling.
- Readjust the pillow to the sling as needed.

Putting the Shoulder Immobilizer On:

- Use your nonsurgical arm to place the waist strap (3) to go from the affected to the unaffected side.
- Slide the abductor pillow (4) between your waistline and the surgical arm.
- The curved hump of the pillow rests under your breast line.
- Place the elbow back as far as possible in the sling.
- Fasten snaps and the lower arm strap (1).
- Pull the shoulder strap (2) over your head and adjust the strap.
- Fasten the waist strap (3).

How to Modify Self-Care Activities

Dressing

- After the surgery, you may put on your clothing under the shoulder immobilizer unless your surgeon specifies that you must have the immobilizer on at all time.
- You may wear regular clothing.
- For women: You may continue to wear a bra. This should not affect the surgery site.
- If you are unable to reach down to put on shoes, socks or pants, your occupational therapist may recommend adaptive equipment to assist you such as a reacher, sock aid, long-handle shoe horn, and elastic shoe laces.

Taking Off Clothing

- Take the sleeve off your nonsurgical arm first.
- Use your nonsurgical arm to remove clothing from your surgical arm.

Putting On Clothing

- Use the nonsurgical arm to pull the shirt sleeve onto your surgical arm.
- Make sure to pull your sleeve up as far as possible on the surgical arm.
- Now put the unaffected arm into the other sleeve.
- Adjust clothing as needed.

Using the Toilet

- You may wish to use a toileting aid if you have difficulty reaching to clean yourself after using the toilet.
- Your occupational therapist may recommend that you purchase adaptive equipment.

Showering

If your wound was closed with staples you may shower at 72 hours after surgery:

- Take off the shoulder immobilizer per instructions (page 3).
- Following shoulder precautions (page 2) while the sling is off.
- Cover the incision site with plastic wrap or Tegaderm to prevent the incision and dressing from becoming wet. If your dressing becomes wet, remove it and replace it. It is better to have no dressing than a wet dressing.
- Only after the staples are removed may you shower without covering the incision.
- Use the nonsurgical arm for lathering. The surgical arm should hang loosely by your side (do not use it for lathering).
- A caregiver or family member may assist you if needed. A shower chair would be beneficial if you find it difficult to maintain your standing balance.

If your wound was closed with adhesive glue you may shower the day after your surgery. In this case, you do not need a dressing; it is o.k. to let water run over the wound. You should not, however, soak in a tub for several weeks.