

**OPEN SHOULDER SURGERIES**  
**(Rotator Cuff, Impingement Syndrome,)**  
**DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS**  
*Orthopedic Spine and Sports Medicine Center*

*Immediate Post operative period through third day*

**Pain control**

Post operatively your scalene block should work well at controlling your pain for the first 10 hours. During this period sensation is reduced so please don't use ice.

Don't wait until the block has completely worn off before starting your pain medicine. You may take one to two pills every three to four hours as needed for the first three days. After the block wears off you can begin icing for 20 minutes each hour while awake. Do not apply ice while you sleep!

*Time from surgery: 0 to the end of 4th week*

**Office Visit**

Check-ups will be scheduled at 3 and 10 days after surgery. At this time, your incisions will be checked, sutures removed, and range of motion and exercises reviewed.

**Hygiene:**

Please keep your incisions dry until the final sutures are removed at 10 days. Until then you can sponge bath or carefully take a shallow bath. Placing a small pad under the operative arm will keep this area clean and dry.

**Sling or shoulder Immobilizer**

Readjust your shoulder immobilizer when necessary to support your shoulder.

Do this without raising your arm or swinging your forearm.

1. Wrist and arm straps should not be too tight.
2. At least 4 times a day, release wrist strap and exercise wrist and elbow.
3. When lying down place a pillow behind your arm and elbow for comfort.
4. Do not lie on the operative side.
5. If you notice swelling in your fingers or hand exercise your fingers and wrist. You can do this by opening and closing your hand as if you are squeezing a small ball.

## SHOULDER SURGERY DISCHARGE TIPS

### Sling

The sling is used to protect the surgical repair and help rest your arm. Right away (even in the hospital) it is permissible to take your arm out of the sling and bend and straighten your elbow. When you are comfortable doing so, you can also bend over at the waist and let your arm hang down in front (pendulum swings). You may put the sling on over your clothing when you go home (operated arm in the sleeve first and out last when getting dressed and undressed). The important point is to avoid active use of your arm until instructed to do so.

### Physical Therapy

Your therapy will start at the first post-op visit. Most people will spend some time out of the sling by the second or third week. This is fine as long as you remember to avoid active use of your arm: activities such as reaching up or out.

### Arm Pad

The pad in the axilla (armpit) is to absorb moisture. Once you are putting on a new shirt or blouse every day this becomes unnecessary. If you do have problems with excess perspiration, then a washcloth works perfectly well for this.

### Office Visit

The first follow-up visit should be three days after surgery. At that time the wound will be checked and a therapy program initiated.

### *Rehabilitation following Rotator Cuff Repair*

Rehabilitation of the shoulder following rotator cuff surgery involves three stages and lasts up to one year.

Stage one (surgery to 6 weeks post op): Regain shoulder motion through *passive* exercise,

Stage two (six weeks to three months): Begins when the sling is removed and focuses on improving active motion and gentle strengthening

Stage three 4 months : finish motion and begin strengthening with weights.

### Time from surgery 0 to 6 weeks

Shortly after surgery we will begin *passive* shoulder motion which will last for six weeks. Since your repaired rotator cuff has been reattached

**by strong but not indestructible *sutures* or surgical thread, it is important to protect the repair by performing your motion exercises you will be given on your first post operative visit, without you tensing your muscles or trying to help lift the shoulder. This protocol, relaxing your muscles and letting your other arm or a therapist move your shoulder, is called *passive motion* and will not stress the sutures which hold the repaired cuff in place. Once healing has occurred the rotator cuff no longer depends on the surgical sutures but will be secured by the body's strong fibrous bond.**

**Time from surgery: 6 to 12 weeks**

**Healing is generally strong enough at six weeks to allow you to remove your sling permanently and begin moving and lifting your shoulder yourself. During this period, from six weeks to three months after surgery, therapy involves increasing motion and gentle strengthening. You should not try lifting heavy objects or work with weights of more than a few pounds.**

**Time from surgery 3 to 6 months**

**At three months following surgery, strength and endurance training as well as range of motion exercises are both continued. Between four and six months the therapeutic exercise program is either completely or in part transferred from a formal physical therapy setting to a gym, fitness club or home setting. Function, strength and range of motion will continue to improve for up to a year after repair.**

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

**We would like to see you in the office the next Wednesday after surgery. When we call you at home the day after your surgery we will help set up these appointment.**

**Sutures are removed the Wednesday following surgery.**

**Pain medicine can be renewed during your office visits or by phone during office hours Monday through Friday.**

**Physical therapy generally lasts four to six months.**

**We will see you at various times during the year following surgery to assess your progress, make adjustments to your rehabilitation program and answer any questions. If we can assist you in any way, please let us know**

**Prepared by Gary Savatsky, MD**