

General Instructions After Orthopaedic Surgery

Important contact information:

- For any questions during business hours (8:00 AM - 4:00 PM on Monday through Friday), call the call center at **(734) 936-6267** and ask to connect with your doctor's clinic.
- If you have urgent needs after hours or on weekends or holidays, call the hospital paging service at **(734) 936-4000** and ask for the orthopaedic resident on call.
 - If you were discharged from the hospital with a pain catheter and the device isn't working properly, you should call the hospital paging service and ask for the anesthesia resident on call.
- Contact your primary care provider (PCP) for any other medical issues that aren't related to your orthopaedic surgery.

When should I seek medical care?

Please seek medical advice by calling the call center at (734) 936-6267 or going to the emergency department (either at the University of Michigan or the closest emergency department to you) if you have any of these symptoms:

- Temperature higher than 101.5° F for 24 hours
- Calf (lower leg) pain
- Chills
- Increased pain that is not controlled by your prescribed pain medication
- Redness, swelling, or drainage (leaking fluid) from your surgical site

- Signs of changes in circulation (the way your blood moves throughout your body), like blue or white toes or fingers

If you have any concerns for your overall health, please get immediate medical help at your local emergency department or urgent care.

Call 911 if you have any of these symptoms:

- Chest pain that is getting worse
- Shortness of breath
- Other issues that may be immediately life-threatening

What are my activity guidelines after surgery?

Your provider will tell you which of the following guidelines you should follow after your orthopaedic surgery:

- Non-weightbearing:** Do not put weight on your **operative extremity** (the body part that had surgery) until your surgeon says it's okay.
- Weight bear as tolerated:** You may put as much weight as you're comfortable with on your operative extremity.
- Light activity:** You may use your operative extremity for light activity such as eating or drinking, dressing, or hygiene.
- Keep your operative extremity elevated (raised) above your heart level as much as possible to help with swelling.
- Bracing or splinting:** If you were placed in a brace, splint, or cast, you should keep this on at all times (or follow the instructions your surgeon gave you before you left the hospital). Please do not get your splint or cast wet at any time. If the splint or cast gets wet, please contact your surgeon's clinic during normal business hours (Monday through Friday, 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM).

How do I care for my incision (the cut that was made during surgery)?

Your provider will tell you which of the following incision care instructions you should follow after your orthopaedic surgery:

- Dressing on:** Keep your **surgical dressing** (the bandage over your incision) on until your follow-up appointment. Do not get it wet. Keep it covered when you shower.
- Dressing off:** Remove your surgical dressing after ____ days (your provider will tell you how many days to wait before removing your dressing). After this, you may leave the incision uncovered, but avoid submerging it under water (such as tubs or pools). You may let water from the shower rinse over the incision.

What medications should I take after my surgery?

- You have been placed on a medication to help prevent blood clots. Start taking this medication the first day after your surgery. Take this medication as prescribed until your surgeon tells you to stop taking it.
- To help with pain management, we recommend the following:
 - Take 1000 mg of acetaminophen (Tylenol®) every 8 hours for at least 2 weeks after surgery. Do not take more than 3000 mg in a 24-hour period.
 - If your provider says it's okay, you may take non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen (Motrin® or Advil®). It may help to take NSAIDs on a different schedule than you take your acetaminophen (for example, sometime between your 8-hour doses). Do not take more than the recommended dose on the medication bottle.
 - If you were prescribed an opioid medication for more pain management, take it as needed and as prescribed. Stop taking this pain medication as soon as you are able. You should stop taking the opioid medication before you stop taking your acetaminophen.

- If you received a single shot nerve block for pain relief, this may last between 4-24 hours. This means you may have numbness (lack of feeling) or tingling and lack of movement in your operative extremity for that amount of time. You will start to feel pain as the block begins to wear off. Prepare for this and start your pain medication before the block wears off by taking your first dose of the prescribed pain medications 2-4 hours after getting home. Take pain medications until the block wears off, then only as needed.
- If you received a single shot nerve block with a pain catheter (so you have tubing in place to provide you with numbing medication after your surgery), the Acute Pain Service team will usually call to check in on you. Take the opioid medication and acetaminophen on a prescribed schedule for the first 24 hours. After that, only take the opioid medication as needed for severe pain (even though the pain catheter is still in place). Continue taking acetaminophen while you have pain.
- **Constipation** (having few or difficult bowel movements) is common after surgery, especially if you're taking an opioid medication. To avoid constipation, drink plenty of caffeine-free fluid every day (like water, juice, and milk). You may use a stool softener like Colace® (docusate sodium - take 100 mg twice per day) or a mild laxative such as senna, milk of magnesia, or polyethylene glycol (MiraLAX®). All of these are available over-the-counter (you can buy them from a store without a prescription).
 - Stop using these medications if you start having loose bowel movements or diarrhea.
 - If you have cramps or stomach pain, you should contact your primary care provider (PCP).
- Bone health is important. We recommend the following supplements during your recovery period:

- Vitamin C: 500 mg daily
- Vitamin D3: 5000 units daily
- Calcium: 1000 mg daily

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