

Orthopedic Surgery Post-operative Instructions

Call our office for any questions during office hours (510-428-3238).

❖ Pain Medicine

- You were sent home with a prescription pain medicine. You may take this at most every 4 to 6 hours as needed for pain. As you get better, you will be able to go longer between doses, and eventually be able to use plain Tylenol, Advil, or Motrin (or a store-brand non-aspirin pain reliever) instead. Since the prescription pain medicine has a full dose of Tylenol in it (acetaminophen), you may take one or the other, but NOT both. You may alternate them, however, or use the prescription only at times when the pain is worse.
- If you need a refill of prescription pain medicine, or a prescription for Tylenol or Motrin, call your pharmacy and they will contact us for the authorization. Do not wait until you are out of medicine!! It can take up to 2 days for us to call in refill authorizations, and we ONLY do them on weekdays from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. Please plan appropriately for refills before weekends.

❖ Ice, Elevation, Rest

- Generally speaking, after surgery the area will be most comfortable if kept cool, elevated above the level of the heart and rested. All of these things prevent the area from swelling. Swelling can make casts or dressings tight, which can cause problems. If doing these things does not make any painful throbbing go away in about 20 minutes, or if fingers/toes in a cast turn pale/white, feel 'asleep' or can't move, call to speak to the nurse (510-428-3238) during office hours, or to the on-call Orthopedic resident doctor after hours (510-428-3000).

❖ Dressings

- You may remove the dressings over all incisions 5 days after surgery, if they are not under a cast. If there is no drainage, you should leave the steri-strip tapes in place and open to air. If there is some moisture draining from the incision, cover just that area with gauze until the drainage stops. Change the new dressing at least once a day to keep dry.
- One week after surgery, if all drainage has stopped, you may shower once a day.
- "The little clear string at the ends of the incision..." , this is the absorbable suture that was used to close the incision. The part under the skin will absorb over time, but you can trim off the outside piece when the dressing is removed to keep it from tickling or getting irritated. It will eventually fall off if you do not cut it. Some people are more sensitive to this material, and develop a red, sore area at the ends, or in the middle of the incision where the knot is. Call the nurse or let us know at your next appointment if this becomes a problem.

❖ School and going out

- During the school year you may need home instruction after coming home from the hospital. If you think this is necessary, bring your school's form to us as soon as possible. After you return it to the school, they will arrange to send a teacher to your home to provide grade level appropriate education to your child. Plan your day around the time the teacher is coming, as you and the child will need to be awake and alert during this time.

- During a follow-up visit, take home a note for return to school if it is needed. If you need to call for a school note, plan on a 1-2 week turn-a-round time for it to come to you. We cannot release any information directly to schools. We must draft a letter and send it to your home, and you can take it to the school.
- If you need a note for release from Physical Education, please get this at your follow-up visit.

❖ Equipment needs

- Equipment is requested from your insurance and a vendor. Children's Hospital does not provide any durable medical equipment. If your insurance does not cover this, you will need to make arrangements for payments directly with the vendor. We only provide the prescription.
- If your child is unable to walk long distances after surgery, a wheelchair may be requested for you. This chair is a rental, and must be returned to the agency that rented it to you.
- Crutches, commodes and walkers are purchased items, and are yours to keep. Please remember that your insurance may not buy another one of these items for you later, so if there may be another surgery in the future, you may wish to store these items instead of purchasing them yourself at a later date.
- If you feel other equipment may be necessary, please speak to the nurse in Orthopedics as soon as possible so we can decide what may be medically necessary for the patient.

Cast Care

Please read and follow our instruction sheet for care of a child in a cast. It is imperative that the cast stays dry.

Bracing

You must follow the surgeon's orders for how to wear the brace, and for how long. If you are unsure, clarify before leaving the recovery room.