

# Guide to Shoulder Surgery

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## **Prior to Surgery:**

- 1) Review the “North Oaks Surgery Patient Handbook” which includes important general information about your surgery and our surgery locations and their contact information.
  - a. It can be found online at [http://www.northoaks.org/documents/NorthOaks-SurgicalServices-PatientHandbook-final\\_web.pdf](http://www.northoaks.org/documents/NorthOaks-SurgicalServices-PatientHandbook-final_web.pdf)
  - b. We can also get you a copy if you are unable to access online.
- 2) Please try to notify our office of any illness one week prior to your scheduled surgery date (e.g. skin abrasions, rashes, insect bites, pimples around the operative site, upper respiratory or urinary tract infections).
- 3) Please leave valuables (jewelry, contact lenses etc.) at home.
- 4) If you have significant medical problems, please contact your internist or medical doctor for documentation or “clearance” prior to surgery. The need for this clearance will typically be discussed during your evaluation with us. Please make sure that we have received this documentation prior to surgery.
- 5) If you have any disability forms or leave papers, please give these to our office for completion. Do not bring them the day of surgery.
- 6) Eating or drinking after midnight before your surgery, failure to arrive at your scheduled time, or certain medical problems may cause your surgery to be cancelled. This is for your safety.
- 7) Bring / wear loose fitting clothing to allow room for the postoperative dressings, slings, or braces that may be used after surgery.

8) It may be helpful to arrange additional help if you have to go up stairs to get home such as an apartment.

## **Surgery Locations:**



Our Inpatient Surgical Units are located in the Tower of North Oaks Medical Center.

- Surgical Intensive Care Unit is on the 2nd Floor
- General Surgery Unit is on the 3rd Floor
- Orthopaedic/Neurosurgery Unit is on the 5th Floor

### **North Oaks Inpatient Surgery Units**

*Located within North Oaks Medical Center*

15790 Paul Vega, MD, Dr.  
Hammond, LA  
(985) 230-6086



Our Same Day Surgery area is located on the second floor of North Oaks Medical Center.

### **North Oaks Same Day Surgery Unit**

*Located within North Oaks Medical Center*

15790 Paul Vega, MD, Dr.  
Hammond, LA  
(985) 230-2100



North Oaks Surgery Center is located on Veterans Boulevard across from North Oaks Medical Center, less than one mile from the hospital.

### **North Oaks Surgery Center**

42144 Veterans Blvd.  
Hammond, LA  
(985) 230-7333

## **After Surgery:**

- 1) You will be given a prescription for pain medication before your discharge. You may also be given a prescription for nausea medication and muscle spasms. Please let us know if you are particularly prone to nausea after surgery or with pain medicine so we can anticipate this for your comfort.
  
- 2) You will be given an appointment to see Dr. Witty in the office between 3 and 14 days after surgery. This will depend on the type of surgery. Typically, this will be made for you at the time of your discharge from the hospital or surgery center.
  
- 3) Physical Therapy:
  - a. Depending on your particular surgery, you may need to arrange your first physical therapy appointment prior to your surgery date. We can help you pick a physical therapist. This will be discussed with you.

## **Nerve Block:**

- 1) The anesthesia team may have placed a nerve block prior to surgery
  
- 2) A nerve block is a procedure where numbing medication is injected around the nerves that travel to your shoulder.
  
- 3) It should provide 8 – 12 hours of relief. During that time, the arm may feel numb and you may even be unable to move the extremity.

- 4) Carefully pad the arm because you may not feel anything
- 5) Start taking your pain medication immediately when you start to feel any pain even if it is minimal.
- 6) Monitor your skin closely and place a towel between the skin and any ice pack to avoid frost bite. This is important when the block is working because you will not be able to feel anything.

### **Recovery at Home:**

- 1) If you are discharged the day of surgery, the first meal at home should be clear liquids. Slowly increase to other easily tolerated meals (ex. Soup) to prevent any nausea. Taking your pain medication with some food may help.
- 2) After shoulder surgery, it is common for patients to feel more comfortable in a recliner for at least a few weeks after surgery. You may feel more comfortable sleeping in a recliner or similar position until that time.
- 3) If you have received a nerve block (see Nerve Block section), it will often begin to wear off later in the evening. Take the pain medication right when you begin to feel even the slightest amount of pain in order to “get ahead” of the pain. Apply ice to help with pain (see section on ice packs below).
- 4) Specific exercises may or may not be started right after surgery. You will be instructed about any exercises that

need to be started. This will depend on the nature of your surgery and what needed to be performed. If exercises will be started, you will receive those instructions before your discharge home.

**NOTE: Dr. Witty's website provides videos regarding exercises under the tab "Patient Info and Education >> Patient Education Videos"**

- 5) If you begin to have worsening pain or swelling, redness, temperature greater than 100.4, or drainage from your incision, call Dr. Witty's office immediately at the number listed above.
- 6) Try to get up and move around as much as possible after surgery keeping in mind any postoperative precautions.

**Brace/Sling:**

- 1) After shoulder surgery you will be placed into a special sling with a black pillow that is held between your arm and your body. See the image below for proper positioning of the sling. The hand should be facing forward and the upper arm should be in line with the body when looking from the side.

**Note: Depending on your surgical facility, the specific sling may be a little different than seen below. However, they will have similar basic components to use when wearing, removing, and replacing the sling and pillow.**



2) If lying down or reclining in a chair, keep a pillow behind the elbow to help keep the upper arm in line with the torso (see above image). This keeps tension off of the shoulder.

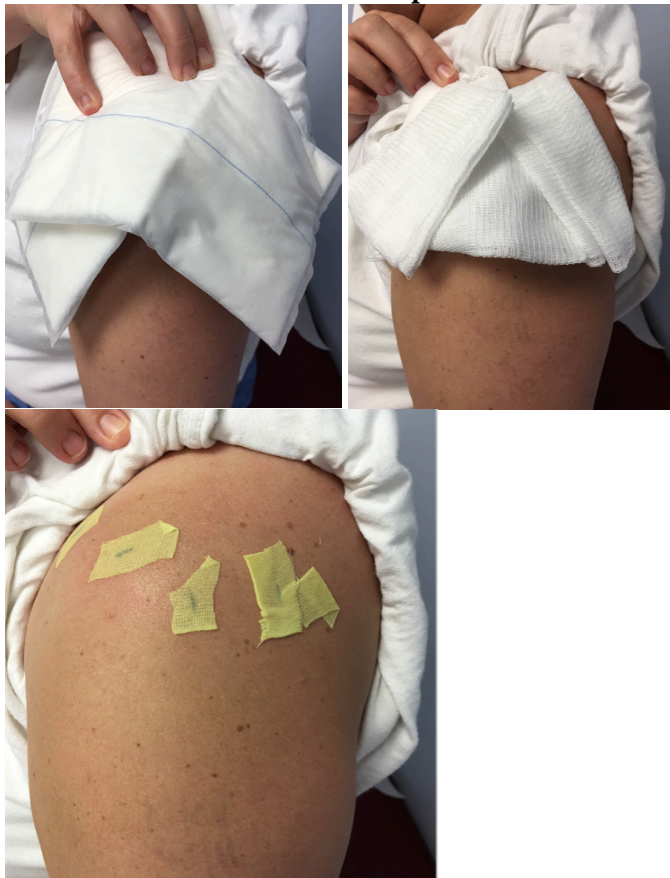
**Example of incorrect positioning of the shoulder sling. The upper arm is behind the torso/upper body.**



## **Recovery at Home:**

### **Wound Care:**

- 1) Typically your dressing will consist of white gauze and white tape. It may seem a little bulky on your shoulder. Leave this dressing and tape on for 2 days. During that 2 day period, reinforce the dressing if needed with more gauze and tape directly on top of the initial postop dressings. At the end of 2 days, you may remove the tape and the gauze. You may see more white gauze, and underneath that you may see yellow gauze on top of stitches. You may remove the yellow gauze. If the yellow gauze is stuck you can just leave in place. Replace clean/fresh white "4x4" gauze or similar dressings over the incisions and re-tape. See the images below.

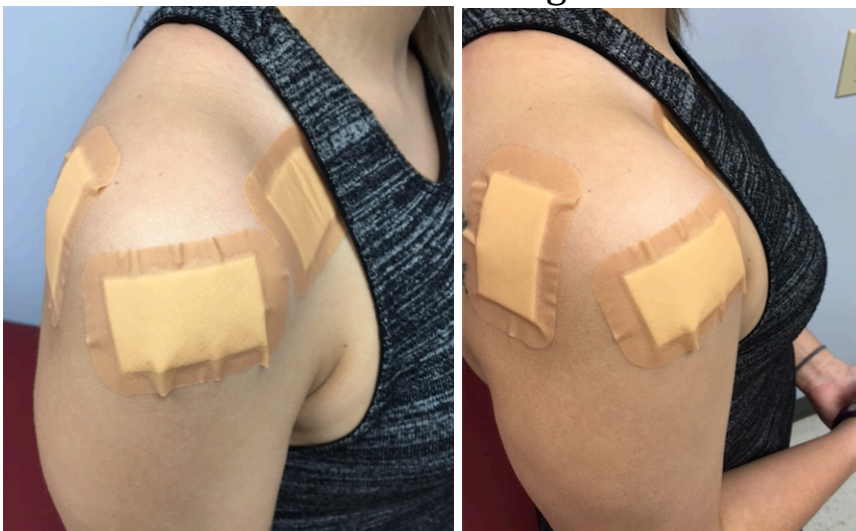




2) Another type of dressing used are “Steri-strips”. They are tape like adhesives. They will typically begin to peel off on their own after a week or so and then you can remove them completely. See image below.



3) Replace the dressing daily until the day you have no spots or drainage on the gauze. You can use either similar gauze and tape that was in place right after surgery, or you can use absorbent adhesive dressings that are sealed on all four sides. See images below.



## **Shower / Bathing:**

1) Once your incisions are dry, you may start taking a shower. Allow the operative arm to hang at the side and use the other arm to bathe and dry. Depending on your surgery, you may not be allowed to “actively” flex your elbow upward (see the specific procedure postoperative instructions that will be provided to you after surgery). It may be helpful to obtain a shower chair, which will allow you to rest the operative arm on your thigh. See images below.

### **Step 1:**

Start in the upright position with arm at the side.

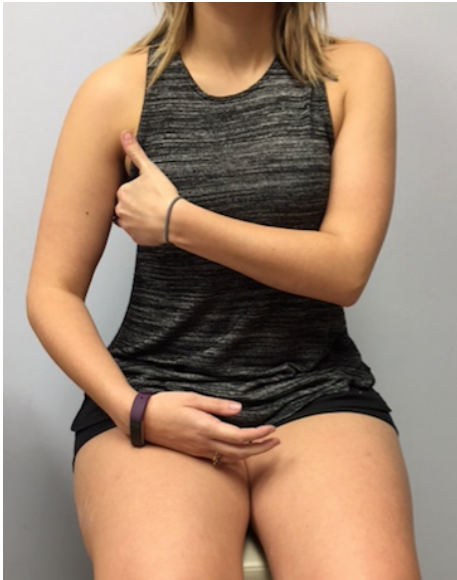


### **Step 2:**

Lean toward the injured shoulder. This will allow access to the armpit without using the shoulder and stressing the repair.



**Note: This can also be done in a seat position. Lean toward side as needed to access underneath the arm for bathing.**



2) Replace your sling without moving your arm away from the shoulder. You may have to lean to the side to gently allow your arm to hang away from your body to apply the sling.

### How to Apply Your Shoulder Sling:

**Note: Please see [drjeffreywitty.com](http://drjeffreywitty.com) and go to “Patient Info and Education >> Patient Education Videos” and watch “How to Apply Shoulder Sling” for details on how to apply your sling by yourself without need for a second person.**

#### Step 1:

Place sling and pillow on surface at least at hip height and stand next to it. The sling should be open so you can lower the forearm into the support.



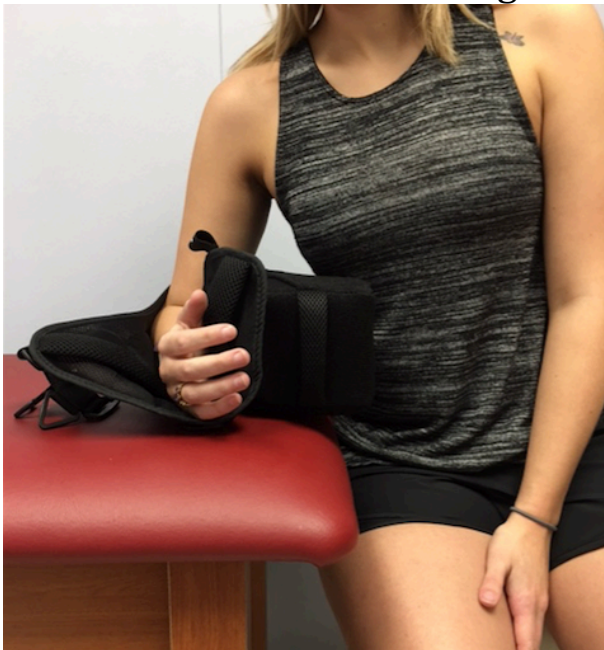
Step 2:

Lean over toward the sling while supporting injured arm with the opposite arm.



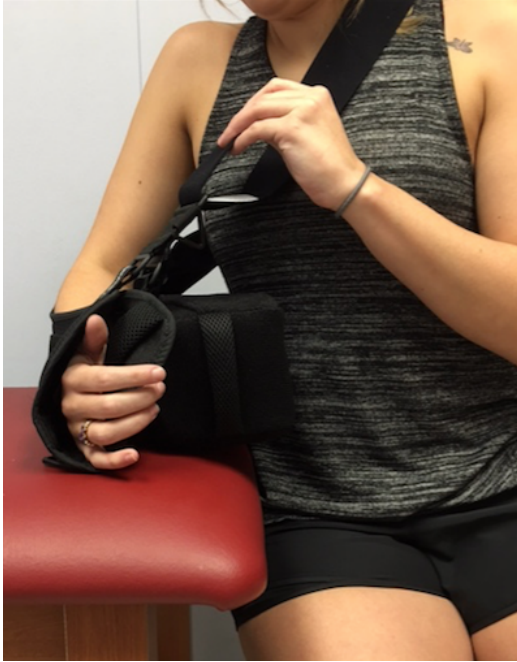
Step 3:

Lower the arm into the sling.



Step 4:

Secure the strap for the forearm support and the strap around the neck.



Step 5:

Reach around back and grab the strap to secure pillow and pass it around to the front.



Step 6:

Clip the final strap to the appropriate location on your individual sling.



### **Recovery at Home:**

#### **Other Activity:**

- 1) Refer to your procedure specific handout regarding other extremity motion and instruction that apply specifically to your surgery.
- 2) Try to get up and move around as much as possible.

- 3) Use the squeeze ball that is usually included on your sling (not imaged above). This can help decrease swelling.

### **Ice:**

- 1) Ice (cryotherapy) can be applied to the shoulder immediately after surgery to help with postoperative pain and swelling. In fact, some studies show that ice treatment is just as beneficial as pain medication. Commercial cooler type devices attached to a cuff that wraps on the shoulder are helpful, but icing can be performed using standard ice packs.
- 2) Place a small hand towel (or similar) to the shoulder and then place the pack/device on top. This will help prevent the dressing from getting wet from condensation. It will also help from the skin frostbite especially with a nerve block.
- 3) Apply the ice pack for 30 min on and then 30 minutes off to minimize pain and swelling. Because you may not be able to feel how cold the skin is getting, please remember to check the skin often while the nerve block is in effect. It is common to use the ice packs for the first few months after surgery when the shoulder gets sore, especially after therapy.

### **When to Call:**

- 1) Please call our office during business hours if you think you will need a pain medication refill. If you are having trouble, we would like to know. Also, on call doctors can **NOT** call in pain medication over the phone. Keep in mind



office hours are 8:00am to 5:00pm Monday – Thursday.  
Friday office hours are 8:00am to 12:00. Call earlier in  
the day so a prescription can be arranged for you before  
office close.

2) If you begin to have painful swelling, redness,  
temperature greater than 100.4, or drainage from your  
incision, call Dr. Witty's office immediately.

3) For any concerns regarding your surgery.