

Dr. Jeffrey Witty

St. Tammany Health System Bone and Joint Clinic

71211 Highway 21

Covington, LA 70433

Phone: 985-893-9922 including after-hours coverage

Postoperative Instructions for Acromioclavicular Joint Reconstruction:

This document is to inform you during the first week or so after surgery. It should get you through this period to your first clinic follow-up. At that follow up visit, your surgery, therapy, and other important topics will be discussed.

Important Phone Numbers:

Please see the number listed above. Contact our clinic for any questions or concerns.

Surgeon Follow-up:

Dr. Witty typically will see patients within the first week of surgery (sometimes 2 weeks). Make sure you have arranged your clinic follow-up.

Physical Therapy: IMPORTANT!!

Please make sure you have decided where you want to do your therapy after surgery. Let our office or Dr. Witty know as soon as possible so we can make sure the referral has been done.

PLEASE let our office know by the first week after surgery if you have not been able to find a physical therapy location!

Precautions/Weightbearing After Surgery:

- DO NOT put any weight though your shoulder, elbow, or your hand.
- Sling MUST REMAIN ON AT ALL TIMES with the following exceptions:
 - o Showers
 - o When you start therapy
- Use the other, non-injured side, to help lower the arm down out of the sling for showers and to raise the elbow back up to go back into the sling after showers. You are protecting the surgery site by doing this.

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Using Your Sling:

The sling and pillow must be worn at all times as noted above. Position the sling as shown in the picture below. You may need to adjust the straps and position throughout the day. The sling should support the shoulder against gravity.



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



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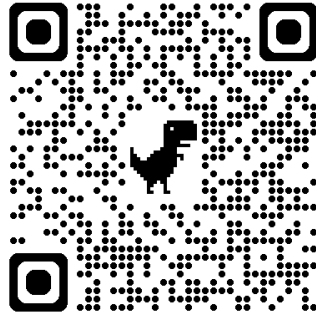
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There is a safe way to take your sling on and off. Below you will find the steps to do this. Also, please refer to the following QR code link for a video on how to use the shoulder sling:



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.



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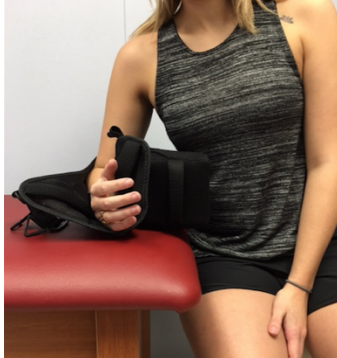
Step 2:

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



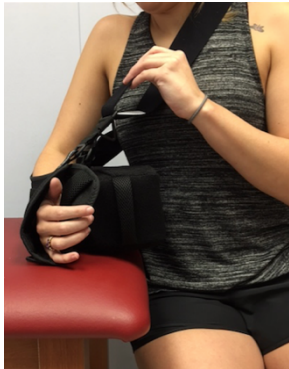
Step 3:

Lower the arm into the sling.



Step 4:

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



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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.



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Nerve Block Information:

- A nerve block is a procedure where numbing medication is injected around the nerves that travel to your shoulder and arm.
- The anesthesia team may have placed a nerve block prior to surgery. The anesthesiologist (depending on the medication they use) should tell you how long to expect the block to work.
- During that time, the shoulder may feel numb and you may even be unable to move the extremity.
- Start taking your pain medication immediately when you start to feel any pain. This could be a sign the nerve block is wearing off. When the block wears off, the pain can increase quickly. Avoid letting the pain get out of control as it may be more difficult to control your pain with oral medication.
- 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:

- 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.
- After shoulder surgery, it is common for patients to feel more comfortable sitting up or 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. Place pillows or sheets behind the elbow to keep the arm level with your torso.



- If you have received a nerve block (see Nerve Block section), it may 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).

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Recovery at Home Continued:

- You may start to move your hand and wrist while in the sling. See exercise section below.
- If you begin to have worsening pain (not improved with medication) or swelling, redness, temperature greater than 100.4, or drainage from your incision, call Dr. Witty's office immediately at the number listed above. PLEASE NOTE, it is common to see a lot swelling right above the pillow on the armpit side of the arm. This is just swelling getting trapped along the pillow. This will improve with time.
- Try to get up and move around as much as possible after surgery keeping in mind any postoperative precautions.

Ice:

- 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.
- Place a small hand towel (or similar size) 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 protect the skin from frostbite especially with a nerve block.
- Apply an ice pack 30 minutes on the shoulder and then 30 minutes off the shoulder to help minimize pain and swelling. You can repeat this cycle as much as possible to help with pain. While the nerve block is in effect, because you may not be able to feel how cold the skin is getting, please remember to check the skin often. It is common to use the ice packs for the first few months after surgery when the shoulder gets sore, especially after therapy.

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Pain Medication:

You will be prescribed pain medication after surgery. Do not share this medication with anyone. In addition to the pain medication, other medicines can be used to help control your pain. Please contact the office ahead of time (such as right before weekends) if you are running low on medication.

Tylenol (acetaminophen)

DO NOT take any if you are taking pain medication that already has Tylenol in it (You may see APAP on the bottle). Discuss its use with your doctor if you have a history of liver problems such as cirrhosis, history of alcoholism, or hepatitis. Obviously, do not take if you have a history of allergy to it.

Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Medication (NSAIDS):

Ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil)
Naproxen (Aleve)

AVOID taking if you have been told by another doctor, any allergies to similar medications, heart problems, kidney problems, GI bleeding, ulcers, if you are pregnant/want to become pregnant. If you are uncertain, contact the clinic. This is not a comprehensive list.

Wound Care and Bandage Changes:

Surgical bandages consist of white gauze and some form of tape. It may seem bulky to the shoulder. Leave the bandages on until the second day. If you notice a small amount of blood, you can reinforce with more gauze and tape. If there is any further bleed through, call the clinic number above.

Day 2 after surgery:

Remove all the bandages. You may see some dried blood. This is normal. You may see some yellow strips on the incisions. This can be removed as well and may cause a little bit of bleeding. If they are stuck, just leave them for your doctor appointment. You can either use gauze and tape or other similar adhesive bandage to cover the incision/s.

Day 2 and after:

Continue bandage changes daily. When a full 24hrs has passed without any spots of blood or other drainage on the incisions, the patient may take a shower. Redress daily and after showers.

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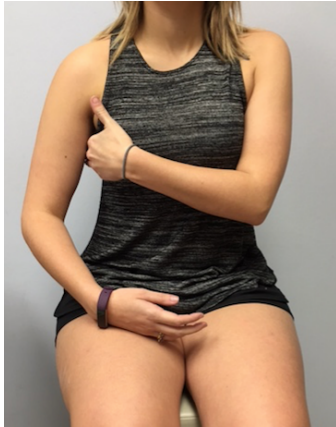
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Showers:

Once the incisions have been dry for a full 24 hrs, you may take a shower. We prefer patients to sit while showering to offload the shoulder and elbow onto the thigh. This can be done on a seat in the shower, a shower chair, or even a plastic lawn chair. Lean toward the injured side to create some space in the armpit to wash and dry.



DO NOT use your muscles to move the shoulder or the elbow. Refer to the sling video above on how to use your shoulder sling to assist with positioning.

Exercises:

You will not need to do many exercises early after surgery. The only exercise needed until you start therapy is moving the hand and wrist as shown.

Loosen the straps if needed to create space. Move the wrist up/down, around in circles as much as desired. Use the ball included with the sling to squeeze with your hand as much as desired. If there is no ball, anything squeezable can be used. These simple exercises can help minimize stiffness of the wrist, hand, and fingers as well as improve swelling in the arm.

