

Shoulder Surgery (Overnight stay)

Patient & Family Information

This pamphlet will give you guidelines to follow after shoulder surgery. If you have any questions please ask your nurse or doctor.

Why is shoulder surgery done?

Shoulder surgery may be done:

- to remove loose matter in the joint
- to relieve a pinched tendon (shoulder impingement syndrome)
- to repair a rotator cuff tendon tear
- to treat a partial dislocation of the joint (subluxation)
- to break down scar tissue
- to assess why there is pain
- to remove the lining of the joint (synovectomy) or to remove a small piece of the lining of the joint, to study it (synovial biopsy)
- to try to prevent repeat shoulder dislocation
- to treat trauma (as in a fracture)
- for a shoulder replacement

After surgery and at home

Pain:

You can expect pain in the area of your surgery. Your doctor will order medicine to ease your pain. **Tell your nurse when you are having pain.**

Taking the medicine for pain helps you to move around after your surgery. This helps:

- to improve your blood flow and your breathing
- to lessen your pain so you can do the exercises (deep breathing and coughing, tensing and relaxing muscles)
- you to rest

You will be given a prescription for medicine to take for pain when you go home. It is best to take it as ordered for the first 2-3 days at home, to reduce your pain and make it easier for you to move.

As well, you may have muscle soreness after a general anaesthetic. This is very normal and will become less as you move around.

Wound care and dressing:

You will return from the operating room with the head of your bed up about half way. Your arm will be in an immobilizer sling to keep your arm close to your body.

Your dressing will be changed as your doctor requests.

If a drain has been placed in your incision, it will be taken out by a nurse before you leave the hospital.

Your incision is closed with staples, stitches or paper tapes.

Paper tapes - peel them off one week after leaving the hospital (pull them off by lifting each end and pulling towards the middle)

Stitches - dissolve on their own

Staples - before you go home be sure you know when and where they are to be removed

Diet:

You may have an upset stomach (nausea) after your surgery. In the hospital the nurse can give you medicine for this. When home, you can buy medicine for nausea at your drugstore.

A light diet is best, eating more as you feel like it. Be sure your meals include protein, fruit, vegetables, bran and milk products. Drink 8 to 10 glasses of water a day.

The medicines for pain, as well as being less active, may lead to constipation. If this is a concern, talk to your pharmacist.

Activity:

- you can be up with the immobilizer on
 - you can expect to wear the immobilizer at all times except when doing exercises or as advised by your doctor
 - physiotherapy will give you exercises to do to prevent your elbow from becoming stiff
 - follow directions from your doctor and physiotherapist about how you can move your arm
- Before you leave hospital, be sure you know when and where you are to go for physiotherapy.

Medicines:

If you are given a prescription for medicine, fill it as soon as you can and take it as your pharmacist tells you. If you are on antibiotics, it is important to take them all as ordered.

Showering:

You may shower when your dressing is off and after your staples are out, or you may cover your incision with plastic before you shower. Do not get your dressing wet, as this can lead to infection.

To reduce your risk of infection, do not soak in a bath or hot tub until your wound is well healed.

Work:

Talk with your doctor about when you can return to work.

Guidelines to follow after a general anaesthetic

The medicines given to you during your surgery may stay in your body for as long as 48 hours. They may alter how you think and do things. Because of this for 48 hours do not:

- drive
- drink any alcohol
- decide on any legal or money matters

Phone your doctor or go to the Emergency Department where you had your surgery if:

- you have a large amount of bleeding from your wound
- your medicine is not helping your pain
- you develop fever or chills
- you have a hot, tender and draining wound

You are a partner with us in planning your care. Ask questions, and be sure you are clear about how you will manage when you go home.

For general information or if you have any questions and you cannot contact your doctor, please phone:

**HEALTHLink Alberta
1-800-408-5465 (LINK)
Health advice 24 hours a day**