



Distal Radius Fracture Post Operative Instructions

1. What operation did I have?

The broken bone in your wrist was fixed using a plate and screws.

2. What should I expect the day of surgery?

A nerve block was administered before your surgery. This will cause your arm to be numb and usually lasts until the night of surgery or the next day. When the block wears off, the wrist and hand are often painful. I recommend that you begin taking your pain medication as soon as the block wears off. You will have to keep your splint on. I recommend that you elevate it at chest level to prevent swelling. Apply ice directly to the splint and hand.

3. What medications should I be taking?

You will be given a prescription for pain medication after your surgery. You can take it as needed for your pain. Your worst pain and swelling is 72 hours after surgery. Once your acute pain starts to dissipate, you can switch to extra strength Tylenol (OTC). Try to avoid the use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatories (NSAIDs) such as Advil, motrin, ibuprofen, and aleve as they can impede bone healing.

4. Should I ice my wrist and hand?

Icing the wrist and hand for the first 72 hours after surgery will help decrease the pain and swelling. I recommend that you ice as much as possible (20 minutes on, 20 minutes off). Do not fall asleep with the ice in place. I encourage you to continue icing the wrist and hand as much as possible even after 72 hours as it will continue to help with pain management.

5. What can I do with my arm and hand?



You will be able to move your shoulder as much as you want. You will stay in the splint for about 6 weeks in order for the bone to appropriately heal. You should not be moving your wrist, hand or elbow during that time.

6. Can I remove the sling?

You may remove your sling/immobilizer for showering. The splint can get heavy so wear the sling for comfort.

7. Can I remove the bandages?

You will be seen in the office 2-3 days after your surgery. At that point, we will remove your bandages to inspect the wound. The splint will then be reapplied. You can shower but make sure to cover the splint so that it does not get wet.

8. Can I drive?

It is your responsibility to determine if you can safely drive. You cannot drive while taking narcotic pain medications.

9. When will I start physical therapy?

Your fracture will heal in approximately 6 weeks after your surgery. Until then you will not be doing any range of motion to your hand or wrist. Once your fracture is healed, your splint will be removed and you will start with occupational therapy for strengthening, stretching and active ROM of the wrist and hand.