

BRACHIOPLASTY

POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

General Instructions

- Please contact us for any serious change in your symptoms, or any new symptoms of concern.
- Walk on the evening of surgery. You will need assistance when walking at first to prevent falls.
- Walk gently for 15-20 minutes, 5-6 times per day starting on post-operative day 1.
- Do leg lifts/non-weighted leg exercises periodically while sitting.
- We recommend you wear lower extremity compression stockings 23 hours a day for at least 2 weeks. These may be purchased online or at a drug store. They do not have to be custom fit.
- Practice deep breathing exercises 10 times a day. Do not smoke.
- Drink water to stay hydrated.
- You must rest for the first week after surgery, but you should not be on strict bed rest.

Medication Instructions

- Take medications as prescribed. You will be prescribed an antibiotic.
- Over the counter Tylenol is recommended as the primary pain relief medication. Please check the label on your bottle to remain aware of dosages. Opioids can be used for breakthrough pain and should be weaned in the first week after surgery. Some patients only require Tylenol, but every patient is different. Complying with the general post-operative instructions will help with pain control as well.
- No more than 3 grams of Tylenol should be taken in a 24-hour period.
- You may develop constipation when taking opioid pain medications. You should continue drinking plenty of fluids. Take Colace twice a day starting on post-operative day 1. You may take your preferred over the counter bowel regimen as well. You should have regular bowel movements. You should avoid straining, which can be avoided with hydration and stool softeners.
- Do not drive or operate heavy machinery while taking any opioid pain medication. In general, you should not drive a care for at least 7 days after surgery, regardless of pain medication.
- Use caution with opioid medications as they have addictive potential. Do not use other sedative medications, sleep aids, or alcohol in the post-operative setting.

Wound Care and Dressings

- Keep arms elevated above the heart for 2-3 weeks. Arms can be elevated on multiple pillows with a slight bend at the elbow. You may lower the arms for brief periods while performing necessary activities. Sleep on your back, with your back slightly elevated on a few pillows.
- You may take a shower 72 hours after surgery. Do not rub or scrub near the incision lines. If there are steri-strips or skin glue on your incision, they can get wet in the shower. The shower may be warm, but not hot. Do not take a bath. Limit your shower to 10 minutes. Then, gently pat dry. Do not remove the tape over the incision lines. After showering, pat dry.
 - You may also sponge bathe in the shower if that is more convenient.
- No pools, hot tubs, or submerging in bodies of water for 4-6 weeks.

- If steri-strips/glue are covering your wound, leave these in place until your follow up appointment. If they fall off, you may leave them off.
- After your first follow up visit, you may transition to a compressive garment of your choosing.
- Compressive garment should be worn for approximately 6 weeks after surgery.

Activity

- You should let others tend to you in the first few days after surgery. You will need assistance with household tasks or childcare.
- You must rest for the first week after surgery, but you should not be on strict bed rest.
- Walking daily is essentially for well-being, the prevention of blood clots, and lung health.
- Do not reach above your shoulders for 14 days.
- Do not lift over 5 lbs for 4-6 weeks.
- Ease into your daily activities.
- No strenuous activity for 6 weeks. No running, biking, lifting weights, contact sports, swimming, tennis, golfing, etc.

Diet

- Eat a well-balanced diet in the weeks following surgery. More bland diets may be beneficial in preventing any post-procedural nausea or constipation. Be sure to drink at least 6 glasses of water daily.
- Stick to non-carbonated, non-alcoholic, caffeine-free, and green tea-free beverages, such as fruit juices, water, milk, and yogurt drinks.
- Do not drink alcohol for at least 7 days after surgery.

Recovery

- Most patients take at least 14 days off work for recovery. This time varies by specific occupational demands. Some patients take up to 4-6 weeks off work. You will need help with household tasks for at least 7 days, depending on the level of demands.
- Swelling is expected to improve over 3-4 weeks. There may be a smaller amount of residual swelling that may take 3-6 months to resolve.
- The scar line typically softens and fades over 6 months-1 year. Sometimes, wound openings may occur during the post-operative period as discussed in our consultation. These should be treated with good local wound care. Antibiotic ointment, such as Neosporin or Bacitracin should be applied twice a day after showering. Then, cover with clean gauze and gentle tape.
- Silicone gel sheeting or Topical silicone gel creams can be applied after 3 weeks, or after incisions completely healed. The silicone should be used twice a day for 3 months for optimal effects. A gentle moisturizer, such as Aquaphor, should be applied the remainder of the skin beginning at 2-3 weeks.
- It is important to avoid moisture accumulation in axilla. Dry gauze may be utilized. Avoiding intense activities that result in sweating should be avoided for 4-6 weeks or until incisions completely healed.

Call us if...

- If you are unable to keep fluids or medications down due to vomiting.
- If you have shaking chills, fever greater than 101.5 (F) or 38 (C), increased redness, swelling or discharge from incision, chest pain, shortness of breath, or anything else that is troubling you.
- If you have questions outside clinic hours, call the main hospital line 617-667-7000 and ask to speak with the plastic surgery team.

Follow Up

- Your first clinic follow-up after surgery will be 1-2 weeks after surgery. If you do not have an appointment scheduled, please call the clinic to schedule an appointment.
- The Plastic Surgery Clinic phone number is: **617-632-7827**

Recommended items to obtain before your surgery day...

- Tylenol
- Miralax or other bowel regimen to have on hand if you develop constipation
- Sterile gauze to apply around your incisions (available at standard drugstore)
- Well balanced diet including vegetables and protein for the healing period
- Non-carbonated, non-alcoholic, caffeine-free beverages, such as water, fruit juices, milk, and yogurt drinks
- Comfortable, loose-fitting, button-up or zip-front tops to be worn in the post-operative period
- Compression stockings: Wear lower extremity compression stockings 23 hours a day for at least 2 weeks to help prevent blood clots and leg swelling. These may be purchased online or at a drug store. They do not have to be custom fit.
- Compression garment of your choosing. Options include Mirena, Veronique, or other options available of Amazon. Please check sizing charts and ability to return the garment if poor fitting.
- Aquaphor for skin moisturizing once healed.
- Biocorneum scar gel or other silicone-based scar gel or sheets, to be used incisions healed.
- A good book

