



Acromioclavicular Joint Reconstruction Post-Operative Instructions

Diet:

Advance with solid foods as tolerated

Bandages:

You will have a water-resistant bandage on your incision. Do not remove this dressing. Do not clean your incisions with peroxide, alcohol or ointments. Do not scrub or soak your incisions in water.

Bathing/shower:

You should keep your surgical site dry until your stitches are removed at your first post-operative visit. If your dressing gets wet please call the office.

Activity:

Upon waking up from anesthesia you will be in a sling and abduction pillow that keeps your arm slightly off your side. The purpose of the pillow is to reduce tension on your AC joint repair. Please stay in your sling and pillow until you are seen in the office. You will be in the sling and pillow for 6 weeks following surgery. You may remove the sling/pillow for bathing and physical therapy. You may move your hand and wrist as tolerated. Please remember that you **SHOULD NOT ACTIVELY MOVE YOUR SHOULDER** as you can jeopardize the repair. Do not let the weight of your arm pull on the shoulder. In order to get dressed keep your operative arm by your side and dress that arm first, then pull the shirt over the other arm. Do not drive while on pain medication.

Medications:

You will have a nerve block prior to surgery unless contraindicated. This will help you with post-operative pain relief. This block provides significant pain relief in the early post-operative period, but will wear off 12-16 hours after surgery. You will be prescribed a narcotic pain medication to help with pain control you may experience after the block wears off. It is very important to "stay ahead" of the pain by taking the medication prior to the onset of severe pain. Once you begin to regain sensation in the fingers or the arm it is advisable to take your pain medicine. **DO NOT WAIT UNTIL YOU HAVE SEVERE PAIN TO TAKE THE PAIN MEDICINE.** Pain medicine can cause nausea and constipation. Please take this medicine with food. You may be prescribed a medication to prevent nausea. You may need to take a stool softener or laxative to prevent constipation. Once your pain is better managed you may transition to taking extra strength Tylenol. You may resume your normal medications the day after surgery.

Comfort measures:

A cooling system will be given to you at the time of surgery. Keeping the shoulder cool will help reduce pain and swelling. Apply ice or the cooling cuff to the shoulder for 20 minutes 4 times a day.

Problems:

Your shoulder may have swelling, soreness and bruising for the first week. This is to be expected.

Please contact Coastal Orthopedics if you have any of the following:

1. Severe pain
2. A temperature above 101 degrees
3. Pain, redness or significant swelling in your shoulder/arm

Appointment: You will need to make a follow up appointment for 10-14 days after surgery. Physical therapy will be prescribed after your post-operative visit.

Please call with any questions 978-927-3040.

PHASE III – Strengthening Phase (Weeks 12-18)

Criteria: *minimal pain and inflammation*

Goals:

1. Improve strength, power, endurance
2. improve neuromuscular control
3. normalize ROM
4. normalized arthrokinematics

Exercises:

1. Start resisted glenohumeral and scapular exercises with light weights
2. emphasis should be placed on strengthening the scapular stabilizers
3. gradual strengthening activities as tolerated
4. no pressing activities or lifting from the floor, such as a deadlift
5. continue to avoid contact activities

PHASE IV – Return to Activity Phase (4.5 months +)

Criteria: *full painless ROM, satisfactory clinical exam, muscle strength that fulfills work/sport requirements*

Exercises:

1. Progress previous strengthening program – continue to increase weight resistance with isotonics
2. Add total body conditioning, including strength and endurance training if appropriate
3. Initiate appropriate interval throwing, pitching, tennis, and golf program as appropriate
4. Power athletes may require 6-9 months to return to peak strength
5. Return to sport, work, prior activity level unrestricted

Red Flags: *Ok to have mild discomfort with exercises, but if it persists >1 hour, the intensity of the exercises must be decreased*

If there is an increase in night pain, the program must be altered to decrease the intensity