

Postoperative Instructions – Acromioclavicular (AC) Joint Reconstruction

Wound Care:

- Maintain your operative dressing for three days
- On the third day after surgery, you can remove the surgical dressing but leave in place the small bandages running across the incisions (steri-strips)
- You may shower with the incisions uncovered beginning the day the dressing is removed (postoperative day three); when you finish showering, pat the incisions dry and leave them open to air
- You CANNOT submerge the surgical site in water (pool, bath, hot tub, lake, etc.) until given permission by Dr. Vega's team

Postoperative Medications:

- Your postoperative medication regimen will include narcotic pain medication, oral nonsteroid anti-inflammatory (NSAID – non-narcotic pain medication), acetaminophen (Tylenol), baby aspirin, stool softener, muscle relaxer, and as-needed anti-nausea medication. A medication schedule is included at the end of these instructions.
 - **Oxycodone** – this is powerful pain medicine that should be taken sparingly. Use this medicine as needed for severe pain that does not improve with taking your other medications first. Side effects from this medication include nausea (take with food to decrease this), drowsiness, itching, and constipation (take stool softener until finished with narcotic medicine to prevent this). You cannot drive while taking narcotic pain medication.
 - **Ketorolac (Toradol)** - this is a non-narcotic medicine that works very well for decreasing pain and inflammation after surgery. You should take this medicine 3 times per day with food, starting the night of surgery and continuing for the first three days after surgery. Once this medicine is completed (all the pills should be gone), you will switch to taking diclofenac (Voltaren). Rare risks of this medication including stomach ulcers and gastrointestinal bleeding. You should not take these if you have a history of either condition or if you have a history of kidney disease.
 - **Diclofenac (Voltaren)** – this is a non-narcotic medicine that works very well for decreasing pain and inflammation after surgery. You should take this medication twice a day with food on a scheduled basis (even if feeling well) when you have finished taking ketorolac and continue taking it twice daily for 2 weeks. Rare risks of this medication including stomach ulcers and gastrointestinal bleeding. You should not take these if you have a history of either condition or if you have a history of kidney disease.
 - **Acetaminophen (Tylenol)** – this is another non-narcotic medicine that works very well for decreasing pain after surgery. You should take this medication on a scheduled basis (even if feeling well) for at least the first two weeks after surgery. The maximum dose of this medication is 3,000mg per day – taking more than this can cause liver damage. You should not take this medication if you have a history of liver disease.
 - **Baby Aspirin (81mg)** – twice daily baby aspirin is meant to help decrease the likelihood that you develop a blood clot after surgery. While risk of developing a blood clot is very low, these



can be deadly if they travel from your knee to your heart. Take the baby aspirin twice a day every day for the first two weeks after surgery.

- **Colace (Stool Softener)** – the purpose of the stool softener is to prevent you from developing significant constipation from the narcotic pain medication. You should take the stool softener twice a day until you are completely finished taking narcotic pain medicine. Stop taking the stool softener if you develop loose stools or diarrhea.
- **Methocarbamol (Robaxin - Muscle relaxer)** - this medication is meant to help with muscle spasms that sometimes develop around the time of surgery. This medication can cause drowsiness so it is best taken at night. This medicine is to be taken only as needed
- **Zofran (Anti-Nausea Medication)** – this is meant to help with nausea that may be related to the anesthetic medicines given to you during surgery. Sometimes, the narcotic pain medication can also cause nausea. This medicine is to be taken only as-needed.

Activity:

- Resume normal daily activities – walking around the house/around the block, etc
- Avoid strenuous activities that would make you sweat until your first postoperative visit
- Once your nerve block wears off, you can remove your sling three times per day to do your hand, wrist, and elbow exercises
- It is OK to use both hands to do waist-level non-weightbearing things like type on a keyboard, knit, cut food, etc.

Sling Wear:

- Wear your sling at all times, including to sleep, except when doing home exercises, PT, and showering

Ice Therapy:

- Icing (cryotherapy) can be incredibly powerful in terms of decreasing postoperative swelling and improving postoperative pain
- Ice for 20 minutes at a time, as often as possible, while awake
- Ice machines (circulating cold water therapy ice machines) can be incredibly helpful and are readily available for purchase online for less than \$200
- Do not put ice packs directly on your skin, especially if your nerve block is still working, as this could cause frostbite

Physical Therapy and Home Exercises:

- Physical therapy should start 6 weeks after surgery, with 2 to 3 visits per week initially
- As soon as your nerve block wears off (meaning the sensation and movement of your hand and arm return to normal), you should begin doing active hand, wrist, and elbow exercises. Do these at least twice per day to minimize stiffness.
- Your physical therapist will provide you with an updated home exercise program once you start going to PT.



Emergencies:

- Contact the practice at 440-204-7800 (from 8am to 4pm) or 216-444-2200 (4pm-8am; ask for the orthopaedic resident on call) if any of the following are present:
 - Fever greater than 101°F (it is not uncommon to have a temperature that is elevated for the first few days after surgery but above 101° is a true fever)
 - Uncontrollable pain that persists after taking your pain medication
 - Continuous drainage or bleeding from an incision (a small amount of pink drainage is expected and normal)
 - Chest pain and/or difficulty breathing
 - Severe calf pain
 - Excessive nausea/vomiting that does not respond to the anti-nausea medication

Follow Up Visits:

- Typically, the first postoperative visit is between 10 and 14 days after surgery; the purpose of this visit is to assess your surgical wounds, review the postoperative protocol, and answer any questions you have regarding the surgery
- If you do not already have a post-operative appointment scheduled, please contact our scheduler at 440-204-7800

Additional Questions:

- If you have any further questions, please contact the practice at 440-204-7800



		Scheduled Medications (take at the same time every day as instructed)				As-needed Medications (take only if needed)			
	Pain Score (0-10 with 10 being worst pain imaginable)	Acetaminophen (Tylenol – 2 pills three times per day for 14 days)	NSAID (Ketorolac for 3 days, then diclofenac for 14 days)	Aspirin (blood clot prevention – 1 pill twice per day for 14 days)	Oxycodone – 1-2 pills every 6 hours as needed	Colace (1 pill twice per day as long as taking oxycodone)	Robaxin (1 pill every 6 hours as needed for muscle spasms)	Zofran (1 pill every 8 hours as needed for nausea)	
Night of Surgery									
10pm		Acetaminophen 1000mg ☐	Ketorolac 10mg ☐						
1 Day after Surgery									
8am		Acetaminophen 1000mg ☐	Ketorolac 10mg ☐	Aspirin 81mg ☐					
2pm		Acetaminophen 1000mg ☐	Ketorolac 10mg ☐						
8pm		Acetaminophen 1000mg ☐	Ketorolac 10mg ☐	Aspirin 81mg ☐					
2 Days after Surgery									
8am		Acetaminophen 1000mg ☐	Ketorolac 10mg ☐	Aspirin 81mg ☐					
2pm		Acetaminophen 1000mg ☐	Ketorolac 10mg ☐						
8pm		Acetaminophen 1000mg ☐	Ketorolac 10mg ☐	Aspirin 81mg ☐					
3 Days after Surgery									
8am		Acetaminophen 1000mg ☐	Ketorolac 10mg ☐	Aspirin 81mg ☐					
2pm		Acetaminophen 1000mg ☐	Ketorolac 10mg ☐						
8pm		Acetaminophen 1000mg ☐	Ketorolac 10mg ☐	Aspirin 81mg ☐					
4 Days after Surgery									
8am		Acetaminophen 1000mg ☐	Diclofenac 75mg ☐	Aspirin 81mg ☐					
2pm		Acetaminophen 1000mg ☐	-						
8pm		Acetaminophen 1000mg ☐	Diclofenac 75mg ☐	Aspirin 81mg ☐					