

Steven J. Lee, MD  
NY Orthopedics  
159 East 74<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10021  
Tel (212)-737-3301

## **Post-Operative Instructions: Shoulder Arthroplasty**

### **Pain Medication:**

Most of our patients are prescribed a short supply of an opioid narcotic pain medication to help ease their pain post-surgery. This medication, if prescribed, has been sent to your preferred pharmacy. The pain is usually the worst the first few days, and usually by the 3rd day, the pain eases up significantly. It is very important that you only take the opioid pain medication prescribed to you as directed, and only if needed. Besides addiction, one of the side effects of opioid narcotic medications is constipation. We recommend that you take a stool softener when taking this medication. Should you not need to take the opioid pain medication, our recommended medication for pain relief is Tylenol. It is recommended that you consult with your Primary Care Physician prior to taking any medications to ensure the medications are safe for you to take.

### **Ice:**

You can ice the shoulder for up to 20 minutes at a time, multiple times per day. You may ice over top of your surgical dressing and may continue icing your shoulder once you have been instructed to remove your surgical dressing. Avoid getting your wound wet. Take care to never apply ice directly to your skin. Always use a barrier between the skin and ice, such as a thin cloth.

### **Nerve Block:**

You may have received a nerve block with your surgery. If so, your arm may stay numb for up to 24 hours. Increased sensation (usually accompanied by pins/needles sensation) and movement of your affected arm are signs that the block is wearing off. You may also experience pain and discomfort of the arm as the nerve block wears off.

### **Sling:**

Wear your sling at ALL times after your surgery (this includes sleeping). Additionally, you should not lift or carry anything using your affected arm.

### **Surgical Dressing and Showering:**

Please keep your dressing on until you see your surgeon. It is very important to keep your dressings clean and especially DRY! Minimize any sweating, including exercising or being outside in hot/humid weather. Sweating increases infection risk.

In order to keep the dressings dry, you will NOT be able to shower or take a bath until the dressing comes off. To clean your body, you can take a sponge bath, using mild soap and a soft sponge or washcloth. Do not soak in a bathtub, hot tub, or pool.

**Sleeping:**

You will most likely have difficulty sleeping in the first few weeks after surgery. Most people find it more comfortable to sleep in a more upright position, like 45 degrees up. You can either sleep in a recliner chair or create this position with pillows.

**First Post-Operative Appointment:**

Your first post-operative appointment should be scheduled for 7-10 days after your surgery. You should call our office to schedule your appointment if you haven't already done so.

**Physical Therapy:**

We will further discuss the details and scheduling of your Physical Therapy with you at your first post-operative appointment. We have a list of recommended Physical Therapists that will be provided to you at that time.

**Driving:**

Driving is something that is based purely on your ability to safely drive your car. In general, it is better to be safe than sorry, and only drive when you think you can be in complete control of your vehicle. You should furthermore never drive while taking the pain medication prescribed to you.

**Common Concerns:**

- Bruising and/or swelling of the affected limb will continue to develop and may change colors (Blue to green to yellow) as time goes on. Gravity can pull the bruising and swelling downward into the fingers.
- Numbness or tingling of the affected limb after surgery is common. This can be secondary to effects of the nerve block and irritation of nerves due to swelling.
- A sudden rush or feeling of fullness with pain when going from sitting to standing of the affected limb is common after surgery.
- Use of the hands to open/close or to write or type is fine. Do not use the affected extremity to weight bear or carry anything greater than a pen.

**Speaking to Dr. Lee after surgery:**

Dr. Lee or someone from his team will reach out to you by phone after surgery. Please call 212-737-3301 and request to have Dr. Lee paged if you do not hear from Dr. Lee by 9:00 PM or miss his call.

**Patient Portal:**

A great option for contacting our team is through the NY Orthopedics Patient Portal. If you haven't already registered, you may do so by heading to <https://www.newyorkorthopedics.com> and clicking on "Patient Portal Log In" in the upper right-hand corner of the screen. You should then click the link "Sign up today" and follow the instructions to create your account.

**Call the office IMMEDIATELY for:**

- Fever (>101.5°F) or chills
- Oozing or redness of the wound
- Severe, unbearable pain, that is not reduced with pain medication

**Report to the nearest Emergency Room Immediately for:**

- Difficulty breathing or heaviness/pain in the chest
- Symptoms of an allergic reaction such as a rash, swelling in places not operated on.

**\*REMEMBER - these are only guidelines for what to expect following surgery. If you have any additional questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to call the office or send a message through the Patient Portal.**