

Breckenridge Surgery Center

POSTOPERATIVE WRIST FRACTURE SURGERY

1. Keep your hand elevated above the level of your heart for 3-5 days. While sitting in a chair or lying in bed, place your arm on pillows to keep it elevated. While walking around, keep your hand elevated on your opposite shoulder. You may discontinue elevation when lowering the hand no longer causes it to throb.
2. A plaster splint covered with a soft dressing is placed at the conclusion of the surgery. This dressing very often feels tight. You are welcome to loosen some of the overlying ACE wrap, but please do not remove the deeper layers.
3. Place a large bag over the dressing when you shower or bathe. Place 2 rubber bands above the dressing to keep the bag in place and prevent leaking.
4. The dressing/splint needs to remain in place until your first postoperative appointment. If it gets wet or breaks, please contact the office during business hours to schedule a visit to change the dressing.
5. On the day of surgery, please begin simple exercises by gently opening and closing a fist.
6. Use exposed fingers with light activities, such as eating and dressing. But do not use the affected extremity to do any lifting.
7. A postoperative appointment will be made for 10-14 days following the procedure. Casts or splints are often provided at this visit.
8. Most patients benefit from specialized hand therapy which will be tailored to the needs of the patient and the specific fracture type.
9. Return to work instructions and limitations are highly variable, as patients have many different requirements, and specific plans will be developed if necessary at your first follow-up visit.

COMMON QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS:

1. **PAIN:** Wrist fracture surgery is often quite painful. Narcotic pain medication is usually necessary for several days following surgery. Due to DEA regulations and our practice policy, narcotic pain medication refills and prescriptions can not be called-in or provided except during business hours with a written prescription.
2. **SWELLING:** Swelling is present following every surgery and is most severe for the first 5-10 days after wrist surgery. It can be made worse with use of a sling. Elevation is very important. Ice can be used in moderation if desired.
3. **NUMBNESS AND TINGLING:** Long-acting local anesthetic is usually injected at the conclusion of the surgery. This can lead to numbness of the fingers which can last as long as 24 hours. The surgery itself can also cause temporary numbness that may last for a longer period of time. Please alert your doctor at your postop visit if you have any new numbness that you did not have before surgery.
4. **INFECTION:** Infections following hand and wrist surgery are exceedingly rare, but can occur. Please contact the office if intense redness, streaking, or fever develop.