

Patient Education

Ambulatory Surgery Center



After Your Hand Surgery

Self-care

Follow-up Visit:

- Bone and Joint Center
- Eastside Specialty Center

Date: _____

Time: _____

- Physical Therapy:

Date: _____

Time: _____

Call Your Doctor If You Have:

- A fever higher than 101°F (38.3°C), sweating, or chills
- Increased redness, warmth, or foul-smelling drainage from your incision
- Nausea, vomiting, or itching that will not stop

Weekdays during business hours: Call 206-598-4263.

After hours and on weekends and holidays:

Call the hospital paging operator at 206-598-6190. Ask for the Hand Fellow on call for Orthopaedics to be paged.

Pain Medicines

Some discomfort is normal after surgery. Pain medicines usually will not take away all of your pain, but they will help lessen it. Take your pain medicines as prescribed. Your prescriptions will be filled and given to you before you leave the hospital. Narcotic pain medicines may cause constipation, nausea, and itching.

- Do **not** drive while you are taking narcotic pain medicine. It can make you sleepy and slow your reaction time.
- Your medicine should last until your next follow-up visit.
- Medicine requests take 48 hours to fill.

Nausea

To lessen nausea, take your pain medicine with food. If you still have nausea and vomiting after several hours, call our nurse. We may need to change your medicine.

Constipation

To avoid getting constipated, drink plenty of water, eat foods high in fiber, and get up and walk around every few hours. We will also give you a medicine called a *stool softener* to help ease constipation.

Itching

If you have itching, you may take a Benadryl to relieve it. If the itching continues or you develop a rash, call the nurse. We may need to change or stop your medicine.

Swelling

It is normal to have some swelling after surgery.

- Keep your hand or arm above your heart. Do this by resting it on several pillows. This helps reduce both pain and swelling.
- Take the anti-inflammatory medicine that we have prescribed (naproxen or ibuprofen). This will help reduce your swelling. Some patients should not take these medicines. If this is true for you, we will not prescribe them for you.

UW Medicine

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
MEDICAL CENTER

Questions?

Bone and Joint Clinic: 206-598-4263 (HAND)

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC clinic staff is also available to help.

For Labor and Industry (L&I) questions:
206-598-4263

For questions about infections and medicines, call the Hand Center Nurse:
206-598-4263

Eastside Specialty:
425-646-7777

Roosevelt Physical Therapy:
206-598-2888

If you have severe reactions to medicines such as difficulty breathing, hives, or lots of bleeding, **call 9-1-1 right away or seek help at any emergency room.**

- Use a cold pack on your hand or arm to help lessen swelling. Use it for 20 minutes on, and then 20 minutes off. Check your skin often to make sure it is not getting too cold. Your hand or arm may still be numb after surgery and you may not feel how cold it is getting.
- If your fingers are sticking out of a splint or cast, it is OK to move them (unless your doctor tells you not to). Moving your fingers will help lessen the swelling. Do not move your fingers if they are covered with a splint or bandage.

The Day After Surgery

Continue to follow the self-care guidelines above.

Activity

Get up and walk around several times a day. This will help you heal faster and help prevent blood clots and constipation.

Drain

If you have a drain, you will remove it 24 hours after surgery. To do this, release the suction bulb and pull the drain toward your body. Ask someone to help you with this. Throw away the drain in a ziplock bag.

The 2nd Day to 2 Weeks After Surgery

- **Swelling** will be greatest 1 to 2 days after surgery. After that, it should start to lessen. It can take up to 6 weeks for most of your swelling to go away.
- **Pain** is usually worst 2 to 3 days after surgery. After that, the pain should start to ease slowly. If you use your hand too much, the pain may get worse. That is your sign to rest your hand.
- Keep your **dressing** (bandage) clean and dry. Also follow the instructions below for your specific surgery:
 - **Carpal tunnel:** Remove your dressing in 2 days and cover your incision with a bandage.
 - **Trigger finger or ganglion cyst:** Remove the splint in 1 week and cover it with a bandage. You may see our physical therapist at this time.
 - **Fracture or broken bone, radial, or ligament repair:** Keep your dressing on until you see the doctor 10 to 12 days after surgery.
 - **Hand tenolysis, Dupuytren's release, and hardware removal:** Keep your splint on until your first physical therapy visit. Your therapist will remove the splint for you. Bring your physical therapy prescription to your first visit.
- We will remove your **stitches** about 10 to 14 days after your surgery.

UW Medicine

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
MEDICAL CENTER

Ambulatory Surgery Center

Box 354740

4245 Roosevelt, Way, Seattle, WA 98105
206-598-HAND (4263)

© University of Washington Medical Center
Published: 07/2006, 11/2007, 03/2012, 09/2012
Clinician Review: 09/2012

Reprints on Health Online: <https://healthonline.washington.edu>