



## After Your Lateral Epicondylar Release Surgery

### *Self-care and follow-up*

This handout explains follow-up care after surgery for lateral epicondylar release, also known as “tennis elbow.”

If your incision is red or there is drainage coming from it, call us right away at the phone numbers listed on the next page. Go to the emergency room if this occurs at night or on a weekend.

### Wound Care

- After surgery, your arm will be placed in a bulky splint that goes from your hand to above the elbow. This helps protect the incision site and lessens swelling.

### Pain Management

- You will receive a prescription for narcotic pain medicine. Take this medicine only if you need it.
- Be sure to talk with the clinic nurse about how to take your pain medicine. To best manage your pain, you must take your pain medicine the way it was prescribed. Taking the correct dose at the right time is very important.
- If you have uncomfortable side effects from the pain medicine, call the nurse at 206-598-4263.
- Please see “Medications After Surgery” for more instructions.

### Driving

- Do **not** drive if you are taking narcotic pain medicine. It is not safe. The medicine can make you sleepy and delay your reaction time.
- Once you are no longer taking the medicine, you may drive as soon as you can comfortably grip the steering wheel with both hands.

### Activity

- Move your fingers to help prevent stiffness. Try to completely bend and straighten your fingers 5 or 6 times a day.
- Because you won’t be using your arm for your everyday activities, also exercise your shoulder several times a day by raising your arm overhead. This will help lessen stiffness in your shoulder.

### Questions or Concerns?

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

Weekdays, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.: Call the Hand Center at **206-598-4263**.

After office hours and on weekends and holidays: Call the hospital operator at **206-598-6190**. Ask for the Hand Fellow on call to be paged. Your call will be returned.

For more information, please visit the Hand Center online at [www.uwhand.com](http://www.uwhand.com).

- Do **not** lift or use any object heavier than a pencil until the sutures have been removed.
- You may do some typing or writing right after surgery, but this may be difficult for 3 to 4 weeks because of swelling or stiffness.
- Elevate your hand as much as possible to lessen swelling, pain, and stiffness.

### Follow-up

- When you leave the surgery center, you should have a follow-up appointment in the Hand Center already set for 10 to 14 days after surgery. Your sutures will be removed at this visit.
- After your sutures are removed, your arm will be placed in a removable cast that goes above your elbow. You will be able to remove this cast to do your therapy exercises and to bathe.
- Once the sutures have been removed, you will visit our hand therapist, who will teach you exercises to increase the range of motion of your elbow and wrist.

### Results

Most patients who have lateral epicondylar release surgery regain full use of their hand, wrist, and elbow. It may take 3 to 4 months to recover full strength.

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON  
**MEDICAL CENTER**  
UW Medicine

#### Hand Center

Box 354740  
4245 Roosevelt Way N.E. Seattle, WA 98105  
206-598-4263