



After Your PIP Joint Replacement Surgery

Self-care and follow-up

This handout explains follow-up care after your PIP (*proximal interphalangeal*) joint replacement surgery. PIP joints are between the first (*proximal*) and second (*intermediate*) finger bones (*phalanges*).

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 your surgery, your hand will be placed in a bulky plaster splint. This splint helps protect the incision and lessens swelling.
- The splint will go from your fingertip to your forearm. It will stay on until your visit with a physical or occupational therapist 1 week after your surgery.
- Do not get the splint wet. When bathing, cover it with a plastic bag.
- Your wrist and palm may swell. Use an ice pack for up to 20 minutes at a time over the surgical site to help control swelling. Be sure to place a thin cloth between your skin and the ice pack to protect your skin. It may be hard to use an ice pack until the splint has been removed.
- Elevate your hand as much as possible to lessen swelling and pain.

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.

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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.

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

- You will have very limited use of your hand for 6 weeks after your surgery.
- You must not open jar lids or lift heavy objects for 6 to 8 weeks.

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. At that visit:

- We will remove your sutures.
- We will refer you to a physical or occupational therapist who will teach you exercises to lessen scarring around the incision and to help increase your hand strength and range of motion.
- The therapist will make you a new splint to help protect your joint replacement. You must wear this splint at all times, except to do the exercises the therapist gives you.
- You will need to see the therapist many times during your recovery. You may have 1 to 3 visits a week for 8 to 12 weeks.

Results

Most patients who have finger joint replacement surgery have excellent pain relief after surgery. We expect that patients will regain “functional” range of motion, but never full motion.

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