

## **Post Operative Instructions for Starkville Orthopedic Clinic Patients**

Now that your surgery is completed, you and your loved ones may be wondering what you should be doing during your recovery period. Listed below are some tips that you may find useful during your recovery period.

### **The first 24 hours after surgery**

- Do not drive a car or operate machinery that requires your full concentration.
- Do not sign legal documents or make major decisions.
- Do not use alcohol or take recreational drugs.
- Have someone stay with you or check in on you frequently.
- Manage your pain. Resume your home medicines unless otherwise told to you by your physician.
- Refer to the discharge instructions given to you at the hospital.

### **Manage your discomfort**

In addition to pain medication, ice and elevation are ways to decrease discomfort.

**Elevation:** If you had knee, ankle or arm surgery, this will be helpful in reducing swelling. A general rule is to keep the operative area above the level of the heart. This can be accomplished a variety of ways. The use of pillows or cushions bolstered under the extremity will usually do it. Sitting in a lazy-boy chair does not elevate the knee and ankle well because the extremity is below the level of the heart.

**Ice:** Keep your surgical site cool. This can be accomplished different ways. You may have been discharged with a

commercial device that will cool the site. Follow those instructions. Some patients report relief getting large bags of frozen peas from your local grocery store. Others use plastic bags sealed with ice. The cold will gently penetrate your dressing and help with swelling and inflammation. A general rule is to apply the cold to the site for 20-30 minutes every hour for the first 48 hours.

**Incisions:**

- Keep your incision and surgical site clean and dry and do not change unless instructed.
- Shoulder and knee arthroscopy dressings can be changed around 72 hours (3 days). Cover the dressing with waterproof band-aids. You may shower then and exchange wet for dry afterwards. No tub baths until your follow up.
- Some bloody or clearish discharge is normal on your surgical dressing. If it keeps expanding or is not tapering off please let us know.
- Please report the following to us
  - Increasing drainage
  - Increasing redness or foul odor
  - Increasing pain and swelling
  - Fever over 101 degrees Fahrenheit
  - Increasing pain not relieved by rest, elevation, ice and pain medicine

**When to call: Please notify us with any of the following symptoms. If you do not hear from us, please go to the nearest emergency room**

- Drainage, foul odor or cloudy discharge
- Sudden onset of calf pain
- Sudden onset of shortness of breath
- Chest pain

- Coldness, numbness or sustained blue color of the extremity

## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)**

### *How do I contact Starkville Orthopedic Clinic?*

Our website has a link to each of the providers' assistants. You can e-mail them with your concerns. This avoids missed phone calls and playing "phone tag." Please include your name, DOB and date of surgery in your emails. The other way is by phone.

### *How long will my recovery take?*

There is no universal answer as everyone's pathology is different despite having similar incisions. Recovery is influenced by lifestyle, compliance during recovery and pathology. Your provider can provide you with some general guidelines after your surgery.

### *When can I drive?*

Again, there is no universal answer as everyone responds differently to medicines and surgery. You should not try to drive for the first 72 hours after surgery or if you have some dressing or brace that would impede you from controlling the automobile. We recommend that when you do attempt to drive, short distances are recommended, and someone should be with you initially. An open parking lot is a good place to test your skills postoperatively. Remember the decision to drive affects your safety, the others with you and other people driving.

### *Will I need Physical Therapy?*

Most orthopedic procedures need therapy to regain strength, motion and function postoperatively. Your physician and you will discuss this after your surgery. If you were given exercises

upon discharge from your surgery, do those until you follow up with your provider.

*What about notes from school/work or disability?*

All of the paperwork needed during your recovery to document your disability can be completed by discussing this with our staff. For some disability carriers, we have to make phone calls, research your chart and complete many documents. This is especially true for worker's comp cases. This is very time consuming for our staff, and you may incur fees. Please give these forms to our provider's assistants as giving them to the physician may delay completion.

We appreciate the opportunity to help in your recovery. Please contact us via e-mail or phone with your questions or concerns since our primary goal is to provide you with the very best care.