

AC Joint Repair or Reconstruction

Postoperative Instructions

Michael S Bahk, MD

Diet

1. You may resume your regular diet. However, start slow with clear liquids and gradually work your way back to your normal diet. This will help prevent nausea and vomiting.

Bathing & Sleeping

1. You can change your dressing 2 days after surgery or you may leave them on until you see Dr. Bahk in clinic. If you decide to change them, replace them with sterile gauze and gentle skin friendly tape once a day from a local pharmacy.
2. It is ok to shower or sponge bathe 2 days after surgery but you must keep your shoulder incisions clean and dry at all cost! This usually entails using saran wrap or press and seal to waterproof your shoulder.
3. Do not submerge your shoulder in water - no bathtubs, swimming pools, jacuzzi's.
4. At your first clinic visit Dr. Bahk will tell you when you can shower normally.
5. Many people report sleeping upright in a recliner is more comfortable than sleeping flat on their bed.

Abduction Sling

6. The Ultrasling is a special abduction brace designed to help preserve shoulder motion while holding the shoulder in an ideal position for healing.
7. The special shoulder sling should be worn 23/24 hours a day. It will unfortunately be your best friend for the next 4-6 weeks. This means patients sleep with the sling, eat with sling, work and live in the sling.
8. The abduction pillow or cushion should be on the side of the body and not in front of the body.
9. You may come out of the sling 1 hour each day for personal hygiene and to move your elbow, wrist and fingers three times a day. The shoulder should be relaxed and hang naturally. There should be **NO** active shoulder motion, ie do not lift your arm away from the side of the body! If the elbow leaves the side of the body by more than 1 inch, you have done too much active shoulder motion already! Think of your arm as a dead piece of meat, hanging lifeless and limp along your body for the next 4-6 weeks!
10. Dr. Bahk will teach you special exercises for your shoulder at your first postoperative visit.

Pain Medication

11. Take your pain medication as prescribed. This usually means 1 tablet every for 4 hours for mild pain or 2 tablets every 4-6 hours for severe pain. You may want to take it regularly for the first 48 hours after surgery. Do not take any additional Tylenol.

12. No driving while taking any narcotic pain medication!
13. The pain medication may cause some nausea so take it with some food.
14. The pain medication may also cause constipation so if you take it regularly, take a stool softener, fiber bar, Metamucil or prune juice to prevent constipation.

Cold Therapy

15. A cold therapy unit is optional; it helps reduce pain and swelling. You may use it for 30 minutes at a time every hour if desired. **Very important!** However, you must protect your skin from direct contact with the cold therapy pad at all times with an in-between layer of dressing or cloth. Your skin can get freezer burn if the cold pad touches the skin directly for extended time! Protect your skin at all times!

Follow-up Care

16. Watch for signs of infection (temperature > 101.5°F, persistent bleeding or drainage from the wound, foul odor) persistent numbness, tingling, weakness in the arm or hand, progressively worsening pain unresponsive to pain medication, chest pain or difficulty breathing. If you have any of these symptoms, call the office if during normal business hours or go to the nearest emergency room!
17. If you do not have a postoperative appointment set-up already, please call the office to schedule an appointment for 7-10 days after surgery at (805) 578-8550 x 6879 or through the appointment desk at (818) 901-6600.