

# Shoulder Arthroscopy Post-operative Instructions

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**PLEASE READ ALL OF THESE INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY. THEY WILL ANSWER MOST OF YOUR QUESTIONS.**

1. It is normal to have some swelling and discomfort for several days or more after shoulder surgery.
  - Apply ice bags to control swelling and lessen pain. A bag of frozen peas works well for this purpose (and can be re-frozen for use again). Put a thin towel or t-shirt next to your skin if you are using a plastic bag. Icing is most important in the first 48 hours, although many people find that continuing it lessens their postoperative pain.
  - Many shoulder patients find that lying down accentuates their discomfort. Place a pillow behind your elbow in a comfortable position. You may find that it is easier to sleep in a recliner or propped up in bed.
  - Use the sling to minimize discomfort. Remove your arm from the sling 4 to 5 times per day to straighten your elbow, wrist, and hand.
2. You may use the arm, but avoid doing too much for the first week or two. **If you had a rotator cuff repair, you may NOT actively move your shoulder.** You can, however, bend your elbow to perform activities such as eating or using a computer. Do not lift anything heavier than a cup of coffee.
  - Begin doing gentle pendulum exercises right away. Lean forward at the waist and allow the arm to swing. This exercise will be limited by the amount of pain and swelling you experience. Gentle exercises will reduce swelling, increase motion, and help prevent stiffness and weakness.
3. Keep the postoperative dressing clean and dry. **REMOVE YOUR BANDAGES TWO DAYS FOLLOWING SURGERY.** Leave any steri-strips in place and let them fall-off naturally. Keep your incisions covered with a small sterile dressing until your first follow-up visit with Dr. Sanders. Sometimes band-aids work well for smaller incisions. You may shower beginning two-days postoperatively. Remove the dressing. Do not allow your shoulder to be submerged in water (swimming or baths) until after your first post-operative visit with Dr. Sanders.
4. Plan to take today and tomorrow off work. You can resume work when the pain and swelling subside. This can be a week or more depending on the type of work you do and the procedure that was done for your shoulder.
5. **Please call Dr. Sander's office today to make an appointment for a follow-up visit in 10-14 days following surgery.**
6. Sometimes your shoulder remains painful and swollen for several weeks, depending on the problem you have and the amount of surgery that was done. This is usually nothing to worry about. However, severe and worsening pain, redness, drainage, or fever could indicate infection (after the first day or two) and you should contact Dr. Sanders. **If you have any concerns, please call Dr. Sanders at 617-773-7457.**