



Post-Op Care & Common Concerns After Hand Surgery:

Swelling

Swelling is expected following surgery. Reducing swelling helps speed recovery and will decrease pain.

Elevation is the best remedy to swelling. Keep your hand elevated above the level of your heart for 3-5 days. While sitting in a chair or lying in bed, place your arm on pillows to keep it elevated. While walking around, keep your hand elevated on your opposite shoulder. You may discontinue elevation when lowering the hand no longer causes it to throb.

Wound care and dressings

The postoperative dressing, splint or cast is a very important part of your treatment. The dressing should be left intact until your postoperative visit, unless specified in detailed postoperative instructions.

Frequently, splints and casts will feel too tight, and you are welcome to loosen the outer compression (ace bandage) wrap, but please do not remove the entire dressing or adjust the plaster of any splint

Place a large plastic bag over your dressing/splint when you shower or bathe to prevent it from getting wet. Place two rubber bands above the dressing/splint to keep the bag in place and to avoid leaking.

Activities

In general, care should be taken within the first several days following surgery to limit any strenuous activity. Elevations of the heart rate and blood pressure can increase swelling and discomfort.

Gentle exercises with any exposed fingers are encouraged and gently opening and closing the digits will keep the small joints supple. Specific activities and exercises will be discussed at your first postoperative visit.

Medications

Pain medication and antibiotics are frequently prescribed, and details regarding these medications can be addressed by your pharmacist.

In addition to prescribed pain medication, over the counter ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) can be taken 600mg every 6 hours as needed.

Pain medications can sometimes cause nausea, constipation and itching. These are frequent "side effects" but rarely constitute a true allergy. Any new rash, difficulty with breathing, or swelling of the lips and face may indicate a serious allergic reaction, and you should be seen by your doctor.

Numbness or tingling

Decreased sensation for several hours following a surgery is often from local anesthesia used during the procedure. Sometimes a "pain pump" is placed during surgery and numbness can persist until it is removed.

Please contact our office if numbness or tingling that was not present prior to surgery continues or increases.

Infection

Infections following upper extremity surgery are uncommon. Please contact our office if you experience increasing redness in the finger/hand, redness spreading up the arm, or spiking fevers (over 101.5 degrees) as this may signal an infection.