



# Charlotte Shoulder Institute

**Patient Centered. Research Driven. Outcome Maximized.**

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## **DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS & PHYSICAL THERAPY INSTRUCTIONS FOR OPEN REDUCTION/INTERNAL FIXATION RADIUS/ULNA FRACTURE**

Recovery after forearm surgery entails controlling swelling and discomfort. The following instructions are intended as a guide to help you heal and recover as quickly as possible after surgery. Any questions or concerns should be asked with your physician before proceeding.

### **A. COMFORT:**

Although surgery typically uses only two small incisions on the forearm, swelling and discomfort can be present. To minimize your discomfort, please do the following:

1. **Ice** – Ice controls swelling and discomfort by slowing down the circulation in your hand. Place crushed ice in a cloth covered plastic bag, then apply over your splint for no more than 20 minutes, 3 times a day.
2. **Elevation**- Keeping your arm elevated above the level of your heart is critical to minimizing the soft tissue swelling. Lay on a couch or bed and place pillows on your chest to comfortably rest your arm. Perform this several times a day for at least 20 minutes per episode.
3. **Pain Medication** – If your physician has prescribed a pain medication for you, take it as prescribed, but only as often as necessary. If no pain medication has been prescribed, Extra-Strength Tylenol or aspirin can be used if you are not allergic. **Avoid alcohol if you are taking pain medication.**
4. **Splint** – A splint may have been applied to your forearm for immobilization and allow for healing. Leave the splint on until your first post-operative visit.

**B. ACTIVITIES:**

1. **Range-of-Motion** – Move your shoulder/fingers through a full range-of-motion as much as possible to prevent stiffness.
2. **Athletic Activities** – Athletic activities, such as swimming, bicycling, jogging, racquet sports, running and stop-and-go sports, should be **avoided** until allowed by and discussed with your doctor after your first follow-up visit.
3. **Return to Work** – Return to work as soon as possible while limiting pressure on your forearm. You should not lift anything heavier than a cup of coffee. Your ability to work depends on a number of factors – your level of discomfort and how much demand your job puts on your elbow and hand. If you have any questions, please call your doctor.
4. **Driving** – Driving is NOT permitted as long as there is significant tenderness and dysfunction in the operative extremity.

**C. WOUND CARE:**

1. Keep the dressing/splint clean and dry until your first post-operative visit.
2. You may shower 1 day after surgery provided the dressing remains dry. Cover the dressing with a plastic bag while showering.
3. Bathing, swimming and soaking should be avoided until allowed by Dr. Romanowski
4. Healing requires several months and **your** cooperation.

**D. EATING:**

1. Your first few meals, after surgery, should include light, easily digestible foods and plenty of liquids, since some people experience slight nausea as a temporary reaction to anesthesia.

**E. CALL YOUR PHYSICIAN IF:**

1. Pain in your arm persists or worsens in the first few days after surgery.
2. Excessive redness or drainage of cloudy or bloody material presents itself on the dressing or around the incision.
3. You have a temperature elevation greater than 101° with no apparent cause.
4. You have excessive pain, swelling or redness in your arm or hand.
5. You notice new numbness or weakness in your arm or hand.
6. Chest pain or difficulty breathing.

**F. RETURN TO THE OFFICE:**

1. Your first return to our office should be approximately 7-10 days after your surgery. Call your physician's office to make an appointment for this first post-operative visit.