

After Your Shoulder Replacement Surgery

After surgery

After surgery you will be moved to a recovery room. When you wake up from surgery you will still have an IV in your arm. The IV will be removed shortly before you go home. After you are awake and comfortable, 1-2 of your visitors may come see you for a short visit.

Remember that everyone heals at a different speed. In general, this is what you can expect after surgery.

Nutrition

Your nurse will let you know when you are able to eat and drink after surgery. You will start with water and clear liquids, then will gradually eat solid foods. A healthy diet helps your body heal.

- Eat a variety of healthy foods, including lean protein, vegetables, and fruits.
- Drink plenty of water and clear fluids to stay hydrated.

Some people do not have much of an appetite after surgery. Even if you do not feel hungry, it is important for you to try to eat. If you do not feel like eating, try drinking nutritional shakes.

Exercise and activity

You will be able to get out of the hospital bed a few hours after surgery, with the help of a physical therapist or nurse. Moving around soon after surgery will help you recover faster and prevent blood clots.

The physical therapist or nurse will encourage you to walk in the hall and will show you how to do some exercises. They will work with you to get you ready for a safe recovery at home. They will talk with you about making your daily routine safe in your home while you heal.

Comfort and pain management

It is normal for your incision to feel painful, burning, or numb. Your nurse will ask you about your pain level. Ask for pain medicine when you need it. You should feel comfortable enough to move, cough, breathe deeply, eat, and get out of bed without feeling too much pain. If you are feeling a lot of pain, tell us right away.

These are some things you can do to help manage your pain levels:

- Change positions at least every hour while you are awake.

- Relax and take deep breaths. Try meditation, listening to calming music, or guided imagery.
- Distract your mind with crossword puzzles, adult coloring pages, games, books, etc.

Interscalene nerve block

The surgeon used general anesthesia and an interscalene nerve block during your surgery. The nerve block will numb your arm and shoulder for up to 24-96 hours after surgery. As a result, you may not need to use as much (or any) opioid pain medicine while you recover from surgery.

Benefits of using interscalene nerve block:

- Feeling less nauseas after surgery
- Lower pain levels
- Many patients are able to be discharged sooner

Side effects from the interscalene nerve block may include:

- Weakness or numbness
- Shortness of breath
- Blurred vision
- Hoarse or soft voice
- Difficulty swallowing
- Nerve sensitivity

These side effects are normal for up to 4 days after surgery. If weakness or numbness lasts for more than 96 hours after surgery, call your surgeon's office.

Regaining feeling in your arm

Your arm will be completely numb and unusable for about 24 hours after surgery.

- During this time, be extra cautious to avoid touching extremely hot or cold surfaces. You will not be able to feel the extreme temperature and may seriously hurt yourself.
- You will feel a tingling sensation as you regain feeling in your arm and hand. This is normal.
- Follow your surgeon's instructions for taking pain medicine.

You may have swelling and bruising in your hand and arm. This is normal. Read the handout that you received after surgery from your therapist for suggestions to help lower swelling and stiffness after surgery.

Medicine

You may be prescribed new medicine to take after your surgery. This might include anti-inflammatory medicine, pain medicine, or blood thinning medicine to prevent blood clots. These new medicines and instructions for taking them will be included in your AVS (After Visit Summary).

Phases of recovery

Your surgeon will talk to you about the phases of recovery after your shoulder replacement surgery. There are 4 phases of recovery after surgery.

- **Phase 1:** Being discharged home after surgery.
 - » Most patients are in phase 1 within 24 hours of surgery.
- **Phase 2:** The early stages of healing.
 - » This includes incision healing and no falls.
 - » Most patients are in phase 2 within 2 weeks of surgery.
- **Phase 3:** The middle stages of healing.
 - » This includes improved range of motion, strength, and activities of daily living.
 - » Most patients are in phase 3 within 3 months of surgery.
- **Phase 4:** The final stages of healing.
 - » Because people have different health conditions, full recovery time will be different for everybody.
 - » Most patients are in phase 4 about 1 year after surgery.

Healing at Home

After you are sent home (discharged), you will likely be told to wear a sling for 6 weeks. Your surgeon will tell you if these instructions are different for you. A special waterproof surgical bandage will be used to cover up your incision and lower the risk of infection. It is important to keep this in place to lower the risk of infection. Do not take this off until your first follow up appointment at your surgeon's office.

If you have questions or concerns about the bandage, please read the handout in your folder about surgical dressings.

Pay close attention to the instructions in your AVS (After Visit Summary). These instructions will include information about discomfort management, medicines, exercises, blood clot prevention, diet, and activity.



Rest and ice

Pick an area in your home where you will be able to comfortably rest and ice your shoulder.

- Wrap ice packs in a towel. Do not put the ice on your bare skin.
- Ice for 20-30 minutes at a time, several times each day.

When can I drive?

You will not be able to drive yourself for at least 6 weeks after surgery. Do not drive until you are cleared to do so by your surgeon's office.

Activity

As you heal from surgery, your body will continue to get stronger over time. Slowly increase your activity levels and movement over time. Do more activities each day with rest periods throughout the day. Listen to your body and take breaks when you need it. Go for walks and continue to do the exercises that your care team showed you.

With the help of physical therapy, much of the range of motion in your shoulder will be restored by 6 weeks. With continued exercises, your shoulder strength and function should be much better within 3-4 months.

Showering

You can shower with the bandage on. Gently pat the shoulder dry with a towel. Ask your helper, loved one, or friend to stay nearby in case you lose your balance. Do not take a bath or go in a hot tub or swimming pool until your surgeon tells you that it is okay to do so.

- Use the handles and non-slip bathmat to help you keep your balance.
- Sit on a shower seat/chair if you feel unsteady on your feet.
- Use a long-handled scrub brush to wash hard to reach areas.

Your helper's role

Remember that the need to ask for help is temporary! As you heal and get stronger, you will be able to do more for yourself and others. An important role of your helper is to be positive, offer support, reinforcement and encouragement. In addition to being an extra set of eyes and ears for instructions by your care team, your helper might also help with the following duties while you heal:

- Help you get ready to shower, as directed by your surgeon
- Keep track of your medicine schedule

- Prepare healthy meals
- Do some light housekeeping
- Pick out clothes & shoes and help you get dressed, if you need help
- Clean up after pets (scooping kitty litter box, etc.)
- Report any health concerns to your surgeon and care team
- Remind you to change positions at least hourly during the day to help prevent stiffness and blood clots

Take notes

Keep a note pad near you so that you can write down when you take medicines, daily activity level, and any new symptoms. Writing these things down will help keep you on track to a speedy recovery. It will also be very helpful for your helper to see your notes and progress each day.

Constipation

Constipation can happen after surgery for a variety of reasons, including side effects of new medicines, not drinking enough fluids, and lower levels of physical activity. Constipation can be uncomfortable and may prevent you from eating a healthy diet. Prevent constipation with these tips:

- Drink plenty of water and clear fluids, up to 8 glasses each day (unless your doctor tells you that you should follow fluid restriction).
- Eat high-fiber foods (fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grain bread, and whole grain cereal).
- Slowly lower your use of opioid pain medicine.
- Stay active. Get up and move as you are able.
- Eat prunes or drink prune juice. Prunes are natural laxatives.

If you try these ideas but are still constipated, you can try taking a stool softener or laxative. Take these medicines as directed. There are a few different types of these medicines, including bisacodyl (Dulcolax®), senna (Senakot®), and docusate sodium (Colace®). Some medicines, like Metamucil®, have extra fiber.

If none of these suggestions have helped, call your surgeon's office at 207-773-0040.

Additional instructions for healing

Keep the following instructions in mind as you heal:

- Sleep in clean pajamas and wear clean clothes at home to prevent infection.
- Keep pets away from your incision and away from your bed/recovery area.
- If you are planning a trip after your surgery, please talk to your surgeon first. We do not recommend going on a long trip away from home for at least 6 weeks after surgery.

Follow-up appointments

You will be seen in our office within 2 weeks after your surgery for incision care and to make sure you are healing properly. You will have another follow-up appointment within 6 weeks after surgery. It is very important that you come to these follow-up appointments.

Where to go for care

It is important to avoid going to the emergency room after surgery unless it is truly needed.

When to call your surgeon's office

- Increased redness or drainage around the incision site
- Severe pain that is not lessened with rest, ice, elevation, or medicine
- Fever above 101°F and/or shaking chills
- New rash on your body without difficulty breathing or swallowing
- A fall that didn't result in hitting your head
- The incision opens up
- Refills for pain medicine or other medicines prescribed by your surgeon or orthopedic team

When to call your PCP's office

- Illness that isn't related to your surgery
 - » Sore throat
 - » High blood pressure
 - » Sinus pain
 - » Increased feelings of depression or anxiety
- Refills for home medicines

When to call 911 or go to the emergency room

- Chest pain
- Difficulty breathing
- A fall that resulted in hitting your head or caused extreme pain
- New rash on your body with difficulty breathing or swallowing

Plan ahead for medication refills

Call our office during the following times:

- Monday – Thursday, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.
- Friday, 8 a.m.-Noon

We will not be able to provide medication refills after hours or on weekends.

For More Information



**Please call us if you have any questions or concerns.
We are here to help you have a safe and successful recovery.**

207-773-0040

Office hours: Monday – Friday, 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
mainemedicalpartners.org/joint-replacement-edu

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