

Fracture Plating Post-Op Instructions

Overview:

Your broken bone has been fixed using plates and screws. Your hand is in a splint. You may begin to gently move the fingers 2 days after your operation.

After Surgery:

For the first 2 days you should keep your hand elevated above the level of your heart to reduce pain and swelling. After 2 days you may find that when you put your hand down it hurts; that is also a sign you should be keeping your hand elevated. You should keep your hand elevated about the level of your heart. Slings are not needed. The bone is not completely healed until 6-8 weeks after your operation, but it is very important to get your hand moving. It is important for you to move and wiggle your fingers, gently make a fist, but DO NOT use your hand for any activities.

Incision Care:

You should not submerge your hand in any water (dish water, bath water, etc.). You can wash your hand under a running tap using mild/unscented soap. Keep your splint on until your follow up visit. At your follow up visit your surgeon will discuss more exercises for you to do.

Pain Management:

You will have freezing that lasts 1-8 hours that helps with your pain control. It is important that you not use the hand during this time. When the freezing wears off, you may feel tingling in your fingers. To manage pain, take Ibuprofen (Advil) and plain Tylenol every 6 hours for the first 48 hours. If that is not sufficient, then take the prescription medication. Do not take more Tylenol or ibuprofen than is recommended on the bottle in 24 hours. You can refer to the pain management handout. Generally, you will have pain for 24-48 hours then it should decrease significantly. A cool gel pack may also help with the swelling.

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IMPORTANT:

The surgery may be performed under general anaesthetic therefore must not operate motor vehicles, boats, power tools or machinery for the first 24 hours. You may drive after three days or when you are no longer taking narcotic pain medication. Please note that the Motor Vehicle Act of BC 195 (1) prohibits operation of a motor vehicle if "the control of the driver over the driving mechanism of the vehicle... is obstructed." Driving with a hand injury or cast in place that impairs your ability to hold the steering wheel is therefore in violation of the Act. You may resume driving once you have return of function to your operated hand and no longer require narcotic pain medication.

If you experience increasing rather than decreasing pain, bleeding not controlled with pressure, excessive swelling or bruising, increased swelling or redness around the wound, increased drainage from incisions or in your drains, foul odour, fever, chills, please call your surgeon's office. If you experience shortness of breath, or arm or leg pain, call 9-1-1 or visit your emergency department.