

Upper Extremity Complex Nerve Decompression Post-Op Instructions

Overview:

You have had your nerve released at the level of your forearm, shoulder or chest. Often more than one operation is performed at the same time and occasionally patients will have more than one incision (usually a small incision at the wrist as well if your hand is involved).

After Surgery:

Immediately after surgery you may be in a splint. The splint only has plaster on one side. The splint is to remind you to keep your arm elevated above the level of your heart on some pillows for the first few days.

Two days after surgery you may remove the splint by removing the tensor bandage and then the plaster. Underneath you will have an incision. We will provide a dressing for you to place over your incision.

You may shower over your incision without a dressing starting 2 days after surgery.

You should not wear a splint after 2 days after surgery.

Activity and Care at Home:

For the first 2 weeks after surgery, you should move your elbow, wrist, and arm (including fingers) very gently to make full movements at least 4 times a day.

You should not use it for heavy lifting or gripping, or strenuous activity.

In general, you want the nerve to be gliding and moving underneath the surgical site, but any heavy lifting or gripping could cause bleeding, hematoma, and possible infection.

Do not do any activity that hurts or causes pain at your surgery site.

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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.

You should keep your hand elevated about the level of your heart. Slings are not needed.

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.

If you have had hand surgery under a general anaesthetic or sedation you must not drive or operate other machinery for 24 hours after surgery. 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.