

## After Your Shoulder Surgery or Injury

*This booklet will give you the information you need to plan for and recover from your surgery or injury. The information within is intended solely for the person to whom this booklet was given by the health care team. It is **NOT** intended to replace the advice or directions provided to you by your surgeon.*

### Planning for Recovery

#### How to Set-up Your Home

If your shoulder surgery is planned, take the following steps to set up your home prior to your surgery. This will allow you to move readily around your home following the operation, reduce the risk of falls, and makes it easier to do things with one hand. If you have had an unexpected shoulder surgery or injury, the following information will still be helpful once you get home.

- Make sure hallways and rooms are free of clutter and tripping hazards
- Add non-slip surfaces to outside stairs and walkways.
- Install stair railings or make sure the existing ones are secure.
- Ensure good lighting in hallways and other well-used areas.
- Arrange for help with driving and household chores such as groceries, meal preparation, vacuuming, and laundry. These services are not covered by the Medical Services Plan and will need to be paid by you.
- Move commonly used items such as pots and pans to counter height. Consider moving items in the lower parts of the fridge or freezer to a higher shelf.
- Stock your pantry and freezer with healthy foods and snacks. If needed, private meal delivery services are available in many areas.
- Keep an icepack in your freezer to use on your shoulder to help reduce swelling after surgery (see page: 10) Have a thermometer at home to check your temperature after surgery.
- Use a non-slip bathmat both inside and outside the bathtub or shower.
- **DO NOT** use towel racks or toilet paper holders to help you to stand or sit. Arrange to have proper handrails installed. These are available at medical supply stores or loan cupboards (see page: 2).

## After Your Shoulder Surgery or Injury

- Wear Velcro closure shoes or slip-on shoes with enclosed heels. You will not be able to tie shoelaces with your affected arm (see page: 9).
- Wear pull-on elastic waist pants. Button up shirts or cardigans are easiest to put on (see page: 6).
- Make your bed using extra pillows. This will help you sleep comfortably.

### **How to Arrange for Equipment**

Depending on your limitations after surgery and/or any limitations you already have, the following equipment can aid in your recovery. When possible, arrange for the following equipment 1-2 weeks prior to surgery to ensure that it fits in your home and is in good working order before your surgery:

- Tub transfer bench
- Hand-held shower hose
- Shower chair for walk in shower
- Non-slip mat
- Long-handled sponge
- Removable tub clamp OR installed grab bars
- Raised toilet seat with toilet safety frame
- Bed assist rail

When using these items **DO NOT** push or pull with your operated/injured arm until your surgeon or physiotherapist tells you that you can.

## After Your Shoulder Surgery or Injury

### To help you get dressed

- 26” Long-handled reacher
- 24” Long-handled shoehorn
- Sock aid
- Elastic shoelaces for lace up shoes

### Where to Get Equipment

<p><b>Red Cross Loan Cupboards</b>  <a href="http://www.redcross.ca">www.redcross.ca</a>                  Toll Free: 1-800-565-8000                  or check local listings for area phone number.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Locations throughout BC</li> <li>• Provide “free” equipment for 3 months, however, donations gratefully accepted!</li> <li>• Limited supply of equipment and may not have all the items you need.</li> <li>• <b>REQUIRES</b> a signed Equipment Request Form. You can get this form from the hospital Preadmission Clinic or through your community Occupational Therapist or Physiotherapist. If you do not have a form within 1 week of your surgery, please contact the Preadmission Clinic.</li> </ul>
<p>Medical Supply Stores</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See yellow page listings for stores in your area Equipment for rent and/or purchase May deliver to and/or install in your home</li> <li>• Costs may be covered by extended health plans; check your plan</li> </ul>
<p>Government Agencies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC)</b>                      Web: <a href="http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca">www.vac-acc.gc.ca</a>                      Tel: 1-866-522-2122</li> </ul>
<p>Friends/Family</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check with friends and family who may have equipment you can borrow</li> </ul>

## Doing Daily Activities with One Hand

*If your shoulder surgery is planned it is recommended that you practice doing daily activities with one hand prior to your surgery. This will help you to feel confident after your surgery.*

### In the Kitchen

- To open jars, use a piece of waffle-weave shelf liner to help grip the jar on the counter or between your knees.
- Use rocker knives to help with one-handed cutting or use pre-cut foods.
- Use deep-sided dishes or containers to help you keep your food on the plate.
- Place your bread or bun inside a container to keep it still while you put spread on it.
- Keep heavier items on the counter so that you can slide them from place to place.
- Only put lightweight items above eye level in cabinets. Store items in easy-to-open containers.

### Personal Care

- Store liquids in small containers instead of heavier ones.
- Use a shampoo bottle with a pump, and pump-bottle liquid soap instead of bar soap.
- Use a sponge with a long, bendable handle to reach your back and opposite side. Wrap the sponge-head with a towel after bathing to help you dry those areas.
- Use pop-top toothpaste instead of screw-on cap. Rest your toothbrush on the counter while you apply the toothpaste.
- Put on deodorant by leaning forward and let your operated/injured arm dangle or swing away from your body. Spray deodorant may be easier.
- Use a gooseneck clamp to hold the hair dryer while you use your one hand to comb.
- Use clips to hold hair back instead of rubber band.

***Going to the Bathroom***

- Use a raised toilet seat or a grab-bar on the non-operated/uninjured side to help you sit and stand.
- To help with wiping, try long-handled tongs to reach. You may purchase a commercial bathroom aid.

***Other***

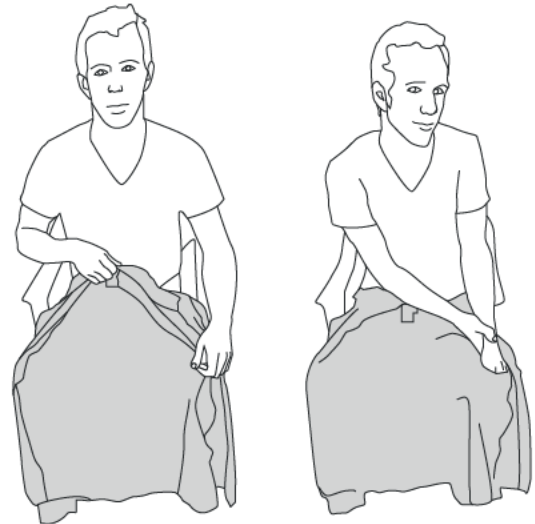
- When reading, place pillows on your lap and to prop up the book near eye-level.
- Use rubber bands around each 1/2 of the book to keep pages open. As you read, slide the next page under the rubber band.
- Use a clipboard to keep paper still while writing.
- Wear a fanny pack at your waist for personal items instead of using purse.
- Try to buy cans with pop-top lids or use a one-handed can-opener.

## Some General Rules for Dressing with One Arm

### Putting on a Shirt

Begin with the operated/injured arm when putting clothes on. When removing clothes, start with the non-operated/uninjured arm.

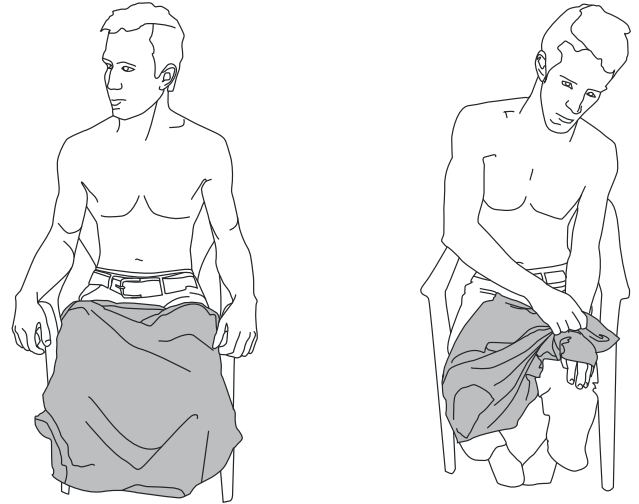
1. Place your shirt on your lap with the inside of the shirt facing you and the label up. The collar should lie close to your stomach and the tail or bottom of the shirt at your knees.
2. Place your operated/injured arm into the sleeve that is directly in front of it.
3. Make sure that the sleeve is pulled up past your elbow. Hold the collar of the shirt on your non-operated/uninjured side. Lean forward and bring your non-operated/uninjured arm over and behind your head.
4. Now you can pull the shirt over to your non-operated/uninjured side. Put your non-operated/uninjured arm into the sleeve opening.
5. To straighten out the shirt, lean forward, bring the shirt past your shoulders, reach back and pull the tail or bottom down. Button as usual. Make sure to not move your operated/injured arm away from your body.



## Some General Rules for Dressing with One Arm

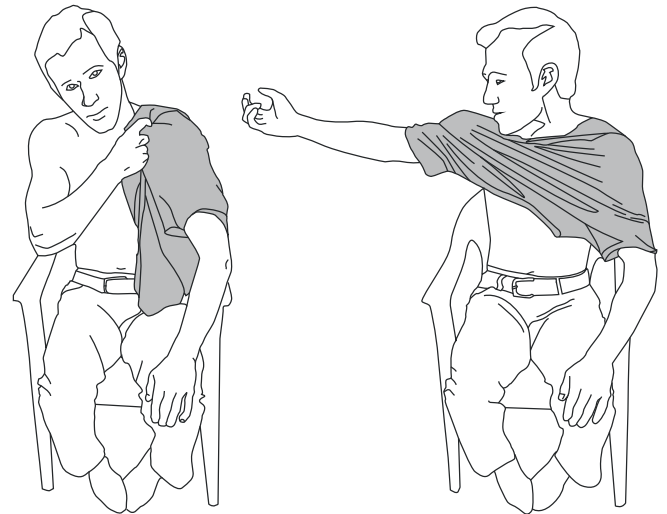
### Putting on a T-shirt or Knit Shirt

1. Place the shirt on your lap with the front of the shirt face down and the collar or tag at your knees.
2. Roll the bottom edge of the shirt back to expose the sleeve for the operated/injured arm. Move the sleeve opening for the operated/injured arm between your knees and open it as large as possible.

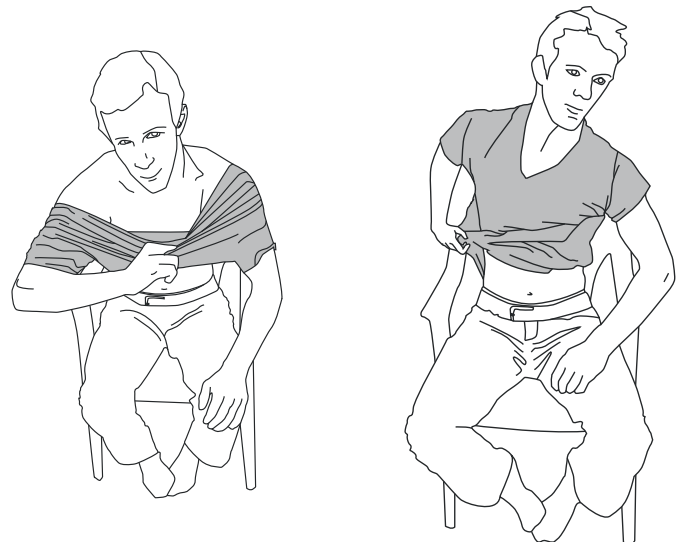


Use your non-operated/uninjured hand to grab your operated/injured arm and place the operated/injured hand into the sleeve opening. Make sure your fingers do not get caught in the sleeve. It may help to lean forward to let your operated/injured arm drop down into the sleeve.

3. Pull the shoulder seam up the arm past the elbow.
4. Put your non-operated/uninjured arm into the other sleeve opening and pull the shirt on the operated/injured side up to the shoulder as much as you can.



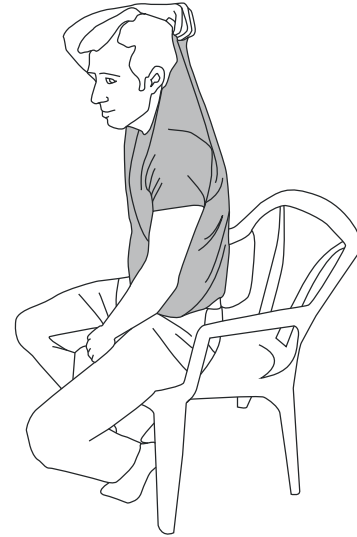
5. Gather the back of the shirt up in your non-operated/uninjured hand. Lean slightly forward, lower your chin and pull the shirt over your head.
6. Use your non-operated/uninjured hand and push the bulk of the shirt material over your operated/injured shoulder towards your back. Pull the shirt down over your stomach on both sides. Pull to adjust as needed.



## Some General Rules for Dressing with One Arm

### Taking off the Shirt

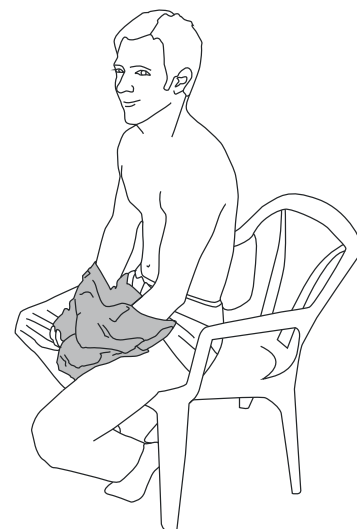
1. Reach back with your non-operated/uninjured hand behind your neck and start to gather the shirt up in your hand.



2. Lean slightly forward, lower your chin and pull the shirt over your head.



3. Pull your non-operated/uninjured arm out of the sleeve. Use your non-operated/uninjured hand to pull the other sleeve off the operated/injured arm.

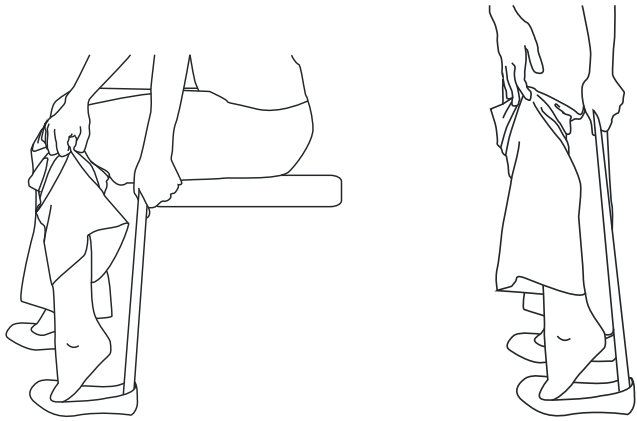




## *Some General Rules for Dressing with One Arm*

### **Putting on Shoes**

- Use slip-on or Velcro closure shoes. Avoid shoes that are too loose or flip-flops that as these may cause you to slip or trip.
- Replace standard shoelaces with elastic laces.
- A long handled shoehorn may be helpful but not necessary if you can manage without.



### **Putting on Socks**

- Put the fingers of your non-operated/uninjured hand inside the sock.
- Cross your leg resting your ankle on the opposite knee or prop your foot up on a stool if you are able to lean forward.
- Slide your toes into the sock, opening the sock by spreading your fingers.
- Pull the sock up to your ankle.

## Physiotherapy Exercises Following Shoulder Surgery

Every shoulder surgery/injury is unique so it is **VERY IMPORTANT** that you follow instructions given to you by the doctor and Physiotherapist.

They will give you instructions on the following:

- Range of motion (the amount of movement you are allowed to do with your shoulder after surgery).
- Muscle activity restrictions.
- Your body and arm position.
- Sling/immobilizer wear times (amount of time ON and OFF).
- How long you will be restricted in your movement and activities (usually for several weeks).

Points to remember:

- Move up to, but **NOT** into pain!
- Ice should be applied for 10-15 minutes, four to five times a day. Always put a piece of material, such as a teatowel, between your skin and the ice.
- Keep the ice off for at least an hour before you put it on again.

Physiotherapy usually begins about two weeks after your surgery/injury. **DO NOT** begin any exercises that have not been approved by your doctor or Physiotherapist.

## Physiotherapy Exercises Following Shoulder Surgery

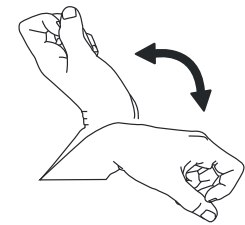
The following exercises are safe to begin right away. These will help limit the swelling in your hand and forearm while maintaining good circulation in the injured arm. You should do 10 repetitions of each exercise, three times per day. You will be taught to do more exercises for your shoulder once you see your Physiotherapist.

- In lying or sitting, with arm kept by your side, bend your elbow as far as possible. Straighten your elbow as far as possible. You can use your non-operated/uninjured hand to help guide your operated/injured arm.

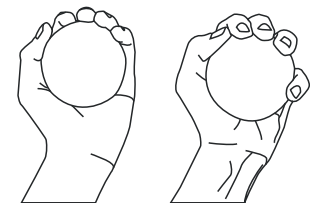


If you have had a biceps repair or large rotator cuff repair, do not do this exercise until approved by your surgeon or Physiotherapist.

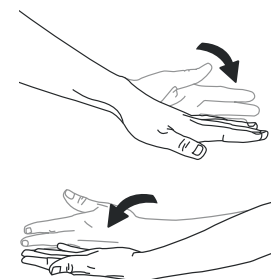
- Keeping your arm at your side, bend your wrist forwards and backwards as far as possible. You may need to help with your non-operated/uninjured hand.



- Make a fist or squeeze a rolled cloth or tennis ball.



- Keeping your arm at your side, start in a “hand shake” position. Slowly rotate your palm down as fully as possible and up as fully as possible until you feel a stretch in your forearm. If you have had a biceps repair, do not do this exercise until approved by your surgeon or Physiotherapist.



## Going Home

### Care of Your Incision

- If you have had surgery, your incision will be closed with staples or stitches. It will likely be covered with steri-strips (small tape-like bandages) with a light dressing over top.
- It is normal to have a clear, reddish-yellow drainage on the dressing.
- Steri-strips often peel off on their own within 10 days. If they do not, leave them until you see your surgeon.
- Change your dressing in 48 hours after you leave the hospital and every other day until you see the surgeon.
- **When changing the dressing, follow these instructions**
  1. Wash your hands well before and after changing or removing dressings or touching your incision.
  2. Use an adhesive gauze strip bandage.
  3. Keep the surgical area clean and dry at all times.
- Your surgeon will remove staples or stitches 7-21 days after surgery. **DO NOT** get your incision wet for 24 hours after removal. After that, you may shower/bath daily.
- **DO NOT** soak the incision in a tub bath or a swimming pool or apply oils, creams or lotions to your incision for at least two weeks after the stitches/staples are removed and your incision is completely healed.
- Expect some swelling and bruising around the incision or in your arm or hand. This can last a few weeks.

## Going Home

### How to Wear a Sling

The purpose of the sling is both for comfort and to remind you not to move your operated/injured arm more than you have been told. For the first two weeks, wear your arm sling at all times except while exercising or bathing. Your doctor will tell you how long you need to continue to wear your sling. This could be up to eight weeks.

1. Relax your operated arm near your stomach. Lay the sling on your lap with the opening toward you and the closed, curved elbow end toward your operated side. Make sure the straps are attached to this end only.



2. Using your uninjured arm, bring the sling over your hand and forearm until your elbow fits snugly into the closed end. Gently adjust the sling upward.



3. Place the strap around your upper back and over the opposite shoulder. Secure the end of the strap into the top ring of the sling. Adjust the strap until your forearm is horizontal. **Your operated arm should not be hanging down.**



4. **If instructed by your doctor**, place the waist strap around your waist and secure it to the lower ring on the sling. This should be comfortable, not tight.



## Going Home

### Bathing

- You may shower 48 hours after surgery unless your surgeon tells you otherwise.
- **When allowed to shower or bathe, follow these instructions**
  1. Wash your hands and remove any dressing before showering. It is okay to get the incision wet and to wash the area gently.
  2. Avoid aiming the showerhead at your incision.
  3. After showering, check your incision to ensure that there are no signs of infection. Gently pat the incision with a clean towel. DO NOT rub the area.
  4. Apply a new dressing.
- Keep your armpit clean and dry. A folded dry face cloth works well.

### Activity

*These are general guidelines only. They should not replace your doctor's specific orders.*

- Follow the exercises on pages 12-13.
- Make sure to follow any movement precautions for your shoulder or arm told to you by your doctor or Physiotherapist.
- Avoid lifting anything greater than 1 – 2 lbs (0.5-1 kg) with your operated/injured arm until your doctor tells you it is okay. This usually occurs at six to eight weeks.
- Use a cane in your non- operated/uninjured hand if needed for balance. You may not use a walker or crutches, as this would require weight- bearing on the operated/injured arm.
- Elevate your arm or hand to help relieve any swelling, making sure that you stick to the movement rules told to you by your surgeon or Physiotherapist.
- You may return to sexual activity when you feel ready and comfortable.

## *Going Home*

### ***Returning to Work***

The type of job you have will affect when you can return to work. It is helpful to make plans with your employer before your surgery. Please talk to your doctor about when you can return to work.

### ***Driving***

You cannot drive yourself home after your surgery. You must arrange a ride home.

#### **You may drive when**

- Your doctor tells you it is okay
- You are no longer taking narcotics and other sedating medication
- You are able to use both arms to control the vehicle safely
- You feel comfortable to do so

You must have approval from your doctor to drive in order for your car insurance to be valid in case of an accident.

### ***Healthy Eating***

- After surgery, start with clear fluids: broth, fruit juices, Jell-O, coffee, tea.
- Gradually increase to a well balanced diet. It may take several weeks to regain your normal appetite.
- If you are taking narcotic painkillers e.g. Tylenol #3®, eat high fibre foods such as fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grain breads and cereals, or bran to avoid constipation.
- Drink at least 6-8 cups of fluid daily.

### ***Going to the Bathroom***

- Avoid constipation and forceful straining during voiding and bowel movements.
- Increasing fluids, activity, and fibre in the diet can help decrease the chance of constipation.
- Sometimes a mild laxative may be needed. Ask your pharmacist or doctor to recommend one.

## Going Home

### Medications

*Restart all the medications you took before surgery unless told not to by your surgeon.*

### Pain Control

- Take pain medication as directed. It is better to take medication before the pain is severe, especially in the first 3 days after surgery.
- Pain from most shoulder surgeries/injuries is best controlled using a combination of several medications. These can include extra strength acetaminophen (Tylenol), anti-inflammatory medication (e.g. Celebrex®), drugs that help nerve pain (e.g. Gabapentin® [Neurontin®] or Pregabalin® [Lyrica®]), and narcotics (e.g. Morphine, Hydromorphone, and Codeine). Follow directions from your doctor or Pharmacist for how to safely take these medications.
- When taking pain medication, you may be drowsy or dizzy. Do not drive or drink alcohol while taking these medications. When the pain lessens, talk to your doctor about which pain pills to stop first and how best to wean yourself off them or when to stop taking them altogether.
- Most people have less and less pain over the next 6 to 12 weeks.
- If your pain becomes increasingly worse or if you have pain in a new part of your body, contact your doctor right away.
- It is normal to have some increased discomfort during physical activity or physiotherapy sessions. It may be helpful to take pain medication 1 or 2 hours before doing any of these activities in the first weeks after surgery/injury.
- Ice can reduce pain and swelling. Place an ice pack wrapped in a tea towel or pillowcase on your shoulder as directed by your Physiotherapist.
- Pace yourself. Do not push yourself. Regular rest is an important part of your healing process.
- Relax and distract yourself. Use relaxation techniques such as breathing exercises or muscle relaxation. Listen to music, visit with friends, write letters, or watch TV.



## *Going Home*

### ***Managing Stress***

Take the time to heal. Rest often, eat well, and generally take good care of yourself. This will help your recovery.

### ***Special Precautions after Shoulder Replacement Surgery***

Follow these precautions if you have had shoulder replacement surgery

- Be careful to avoid infections (sinus, chest, dental, skin, etc.).
- Get treatment quickly. Infection can settle into your new joint with very serious results.

Tell your doctor, dentist, nurse and other health providers that you have had joint replacement surgery before having any

- Dental work (including routine cleaning), or
- Medical procedures (including bladder, prostate, lung or colon).
- You may be put on antibiotics to prevent infection from moving through your bloodstream to your new joint. Preventative antibiotics should be used by all patients having dental work for a lifetime following joint replacement. Talk to your dentist or doctor about what is right for you.

## Going Home

### Call your Surgeon/Doctor if you have

- Bleeding: enough to soak through a tissue
- Drainage from your incision that changes in appearance or color, especially yellow or green
- Increased tenderness, redness, or warmth around the surgery site Irritation or blisters from your dressings or tape Pain that is not relieved by your medications Difficulty urinating
- High-grade fever (38.5oC/101.3oF and over) for 2 days or more Low-grade fever (37.5oC-37.9oC or 98.5oF-101.2oF) for more than 3 days Persistent nausea or vomiting
- Shortness of breath Swollen leg(s) or achy and red calves

### If you Cannot Reach your Surgeon

- Call your family doctor
- Go to a walk-in medical clinic; or If it is after clinic hours, go to a hospital emergency.

### Follow-Up Appointments

Within 72 hours of going home:

- **Make/confirm two appointments with your surgeon**
  1. One for 7-21 days after surgery to have your staples/stitches removed, and
  2. One for six weeks after surgery
- Make an appointment to start physiotherapy in the time framerecommended by your surgeon (usually two weeks after surgery).

## Resources

### American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons

<http://orthoinfo.aaos.org/menus/arm.cfm>

### The Arthritis Society

[www.arthritis.ca](http://www.arthritis.ca)

**Email:** [info@arthritis.ca](mailto:info@arthritis.ca)

**Arthritis Answers Line:** 1-800-321-1433

Arthritis & Surgery Information

### The Arthritis Resource Guide for BC

[www.argbc.ca](http://www.argbc.ca)

### Canadian Orthopaedic Association

[www.coa-aco.org](http://www.coa-aco.org)

### Canadian Orthopaedic Foundation

[www.canorth.org/en/patienteducation](http://www.canorth.org/en/patienteducation)

and **Ortho Connect**

[www.canorth.org](http://www.canorth.org)

### HealthLinkBC

[www.healthlinkbc.ca](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca)

**Tel:** 811 (or 711 for deaf and hearing-impaired)

Offers non-emergency health information to BC residents. Talk to a nurse, Pharmacist or Dietitian.

Translation services are available in over 130 languages on request.

### Home Safety

[www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca](http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca).

**Toll Free:** 1-800-639-3938

Home Safety Renovations (low income seniors)

### “My Joint Replacement” information

[www.myjointreplacement.ca](http://www.myjointreplacement.ca)

### OASIS Program

[www.vch.ca/oasis](http://www.vch.ca/oasis)

**Email:** [oasis@vch.ca](mailto:oasis@vch.ca)

**Tel:** 604-875-4257

“Osteoarthritis Service Integration System”

Vancouver Coastal Health

## Resources

### Ortho Connect

[www.canorth.org](http://www.canorth.org)

**Tel:** 1-800-461-3639

**Email:** [mailbox@canorth.org](mailto:mailbox@canorth.org)

A program through the Canadian Orthopaedic Foundation that connects people who have had joint replacement surgery with a volunteer who has gone through a similar surgery. [www.canorth.org](http://www.canorth.org) (click on “patient resources”)

### Physiotherapy Association of British Columbia (PABC)

[www.bcphysio.org](http://www.bcphysio.org)

– to find a Physiotherapist in your area

### Surgical or Orthopaedic Information

<http://orthoinfo.aaos.org>

American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons

## Transportation

### HandyDART

[www.transitbc.com](http://www.transitbc.com)

Provided by local bus services throughout BC – check your local listings for phone numbers

### TAP – Travel Assistance Program

[www.health.gov.bc.ca/msp/mtapp/tap\\_patient.html](http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/msp/mtapp/tap_patient.html)

**Tel:** 250-952-1587