
Discharge Instructions for Open Rotator Cuff Repair

You had a procedure called open rotator cuff repair. The rotator cuff consists of the muscles and tendons that surround your shoulder. The rotator cuff keeps the top of your upper arm bone (humerus) securely in the shoulder joint. Your healthcare provider made an incision (cut) near your shoulder blade and repaired the torn muscles or tendons in your shoulder. Here are directions to follow when caring for your arm at home.

Activity

- After surgery, rest your arm and relax for the rest of day.
- If you were asleep during the procedure (under general anesthesia), don't use power tools or machinery, drink alcohol, or make any major decisions for at least 24 hours after surgery.
- Wear your sling, brace, or immobilizer, as directed.
- Don't drive a car until your healthcare provider says it's OK. And never drive while taking opioid pain medicine.
- Flex your wrist and wiggle your fingers often to help blood flow.
- Your healthcare provider may recommend pendulum exercises after your surgery. If this recommendation is made:
 - Hold on to the back of a chair. Or lean on a tabletop with your healthy hand.
 - Let your arm hang straight down toward the floor and use your torso to move your affected arm in a circle. First do 20 circles in one direction. Then do 20 circles in the other direction.
 - Repeat the pendulum exercise every 2 hours while you are awake. When you feel ready, increase the number of circles to 50 in each direction every 2 hours.

Incision care

- Check your incision daily for redness, tenderness, or drainage.
- Don't soak in a bathtub, hot tub, or pool until your healthcare provider says it's OK.
- Wait several days after your surgery to start showering, or until your healthcare provider says it's OK. Then shower as needed. Carefully wash your incision with soap and water. Gently pat it dry. Don't rub the incision or apply creams or lotions.
- Your incision was closed using stitches (sutures), staples, or strips of tape. If you have stitches or staples, they may need to be removed up to 2 to 3 weeks after surgery. Allow the strips of tape to fall off on their own.

Home care

- Use pain medicine as directed by your healthcare provider.
- Apply an ice pack or bag of frozen peas—or something similar—wrapped in a thin towel on your shoulder to reduce swelling for the first 48 hours. Leave the ice pack on for 20 minutes; then take it off for 20 minutes. Repeat as needed.
- Take your temperature daily for 7 days after your surgery. Report a fever above 100.4° F (38° C) to your healthcare provider. Fever may be a sign of infection.

Follow-up care

Follow up with your healthcare provider as advised.

Call 911

Call 911 right away if any of the following occur:

- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath

When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider right away if any of the following occur:

- Shoulder pain that gets worse even after taking pain medicine
- Pain or swelling in the arm on the side of your surgery
- Numbness, tingling, coolness, or blue-gray color of your arm or fingers on the side of your surgery
- Fever of 100.4° F (38°C) or higher, or as directed by your healthcare provider
- Shaking chills
- Drainage, oozing, redness, or warmth at the incision or bad smell
- Nausea or vomiting