

Rotator Cuff Surgery: Returning Home

After you have rotator cuff surgery, it'll take some time to get back strength and movement in your arm ... and several weeks before you can drive, work, or get back to your usual routine.

Here are things you can do at home to help yourself get better.

When you leave the hospital, you'll be wearing a sling.

The sling is a good reminder not to move your shoulder on your own, because using the shoulder muscles can cause re-tearing.

But it is okay to take the sling off when you're sitting as long as you keep your arm at your side.

And it's also okay to move your elbow, wrist, and fingers, like when you brush your teeth or type at a keyboard.

Still, you'll need someone to help you at home until you have more energy and can move around better.

You'll work with a physical, or physio-, therapist to help you learn exercises to get back your strength and ability to move.

You are an important part of the recovery process.

By taking an active part in therapy and doing the exercises at home in between sessions, you will continue to gain strength and movement for up to a year after surgery.

If you have pain, try using an ice pack for about 10 to 20 minutes a few times each day. Put a thin cloth between the ice and your skin.

Taking your medicines as directed can help you stay ahead of the pain.

Ask your doctor about when to take the bandage off the incision.

You can shower once the bandage is off and your doctor says it's okay.

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Now, having rotator cuff surgery can increase your risk for a blood clot.

So it's important to keep moving.

Try to limit your time in bed ... and take short walks when you can.

Here are some things to watch for.

Call your doctor if you have any bleeding or signs of infection, such as: ... increased pain, swelling, warmth, or redness ...

red streaks leading from the incision ...

pus draining from the incision ...

or a fever.

And also watch for signs of a blood clot.

These include: ... arm pain and swelling away from the surgery site ...

calf or leg pain ... redness ... swelling in the leg or groin ...

shortness of breath ... or chest pain.

These symptoms are serious ...

If you have any of them, get emergency help right away.

Now, this may seem like a lot to keep track of ...

keeping up with your exercises, taking your medicines, and watching for signs of a blood clot or infection ...

but all of these things are important ...

because they can help you heal and stay out of the hospital.