

Phone (978) 534-6333  
www.longviewortho.com

Robert F. Jones, MD  
Benjamin Brill, DO  
Alison Bird, MHP, PA-C  
Daniel O'Leary PA-C  
Brian Laurits, NP



Joint Replacement, Sports Medicine,  
Fracture Care & General Orthopaedics

100 Hospital Road, Suite 3C  
Leominster, MA 01453

Fax (978) 840-0966

## SHOULDER SURGERY - Postoperative Instructions

- Rotator Cuff Repair       Biceps tenotomy/tenodesis       Labral debridement  
 Subacromial decompression       Excision distal clavicle       Loose body removal

**Follow-up appointment:** Our office will call you the next business day after surgery to schedule a post-operative visit (usually 10 days postop). At that time, you will be given the opportunity to ask questions about your surgery or discuss any difficulties you may have. Photographs from arthroscopic procedures may be reviewed at the follow-up visit.

**About your dressing:** Your shoulder is covered with a sterile dressing following the procedure, and this should be kept clean and dry for 48 hours. You may shower or bathe, but be sure that the dressing is covered and kept out of the flow of water. Drainage is very common following shoulder surgery so you may need to change the dressing if it becomes soiled or wet. Remove the dressing after two days and cover the wound with gauze or a band aid. The stitches used to close the wounds are made of nylon and will be removed when you return for your follow-up visit.

**About pain and swelling:** Some discomfort is to be expected following this surgery. Your surgeon uses a local anesthesia surrounding the incision that will provide pain relief for 6-10 hours following surgery. Following shoulder surgery, patients often find that sleeping is more comfortable in a propped up, semi-sitting position (i.e. sleeping in a recliner or in bed with multiple pillows).

For mild to moderate pain, we advise using a non-narcotic medication such as Tylenol (acetaminophen) or one of the nonsteroidals (Motrin, Aleve, Advil) as long as you don't have contraindications to these medications. For moderate to severe pain, narcotics may be used sparingly as prescribed. Please do not combine narcotic medication with alcoholic beverages. **Do not drive while taking narcotics.**

- Use ice (in a plastic bag wrapped in a dry towel), 20 minutes out of an hour, repeating as needed  
 Use Polar Care device – instructions included

### Postoperative activities:

- Use the sling/immobilizer to help minimize pain following surgery. You may remove the sling for gentle range of motion exercises to the shoulder as tolerated. Discontinue the sling when comfort allows.  
 Leave the immobilizer in place except to shower and change clothing. Do not actively move your shoulder, but it can be moved gently with gravity or assistance from the other arm to help with dressing/showering. It is recommended to remove the sling at least 3 times each day for range of motion to the fingers/wrist/elbow to prevent those joints from getting stiff.  
 Use bolster pillow at all times/if comfortable

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**Return to work:**

Return to work will depend on your work duties- this should be discussed with your surgeon.

**Return to driving:**

Allowed when **no longer taking narcotics and can comfortably reach the steering wheel**

Not allowed until cleared by your surgeon

**Warning signs:** If you have fevers or chills, the pain is not manageable, there is excessive bloody drainage or signs of infection, or if you have any other questions, please call our office at (978) 534-6333.