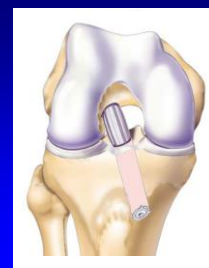




# Dr. Benjamin

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## Orthopaedic Surgeon



## Postoperative Instructions for Shoulder Stabilisation

Following your surgery you will probably stay in hospital overnight and go home the next day. The hospital staff will ensure that any pain or nausea you may have is kept to an absolute minimum. In most cases both a physiotherapist and myself will visit you before your discharge.

Often your incision sites may leak a significant amount of fluid (clear or blood stained) for 1-2 days. This is because a large amount of fluid is pumped into your shoulder during your surgery and it slowly leaks out. You may remove your dressings at any time if they are soaked and replace them with light adhesive plasters. If they are not soaked, please replace them anyway on the third day after surgery. You should leave the waterproof skin dressing and the small adhesive strips in place and just change the outside bulky dressing. If there is any pus, smelly discharge, redness around the wound (especially if spreading), fevers or if you are generally unwell you may have an infection and you need to contact me through my rooms or directly on my mobile phone. Fortunately this problem is uncommon after shoulder surgery.

You can get your wounds wet after 4 days, but you should replace your dressings if they get wet. Keep dressings on for a total of 2 weeks.

Following surgery you will have a sling. You must wear this for 6 weeks, and keep it on at all times unless you are doing your exercises or showering. It is especially important to wear it while in bed or when outside. If you have any problems with your sling, contact your physiotherapist or my rooms.

It is important to do some careful exercises of the shoulder to stop it getting stiff. The exercises are outlined in the separate sheet. Some stiffness is normal after your surgery.

You will need to be very careful not to stretch your shoulder too far or the stitches will tear out.

### **When can you drive?**

Legally you cannot drive while wearing a sling therefore you must not drive for at least 6 weeks.

### **When can you shower?**

After three days you can take the sling off and straighten the elbow to let the arm hang down by your side. You can then bend slightly forward to allow washing under your armpit. You should remove wet dressings and reapply dry ones.

### **When can you work?**

As your arm will be in a sling for 6 weeks you will usually need at least two months off work. You cannot do heavy work for at least three months.

### **When can you play sport?**

You must not play sport for at least six months.

## **PAIN RELIEF GUIDELINES**

Unfortunately, all shoulder surgery is painful and you will need to take regular pain killing medications once you are discharged. The following information applies to different types of pain-killers you may be taking. You will usually only be prescribed *some* of these.

### *Paracetamol*

Take 1 gram (usually two 500mg tablets) 4 times a day REGULARLY even if your pain is not severe  
Do not take if you are known to have severe liver disease

### *Celebrex*

Take 200mg once a day REGULARLY even if your pain is not severe  
Always take with food  
DO NOT take if you know you are not able to take anti-inflammatory medications, if you have stomach ulcers or if you have kidney disease.

### *Tramadol*

Take 50 mg 3 times per day REGULARLY even if your pain is not severe  
Increase this to 100mg 3 times a day if your pain is not well controlled and you have no nausea.  
DO NOT take if you are on antidepressants, if you have epilepsy or if it makes you nauseated.  
Patients older than 70 years should not take tramadol  
Occasionally tramadol can make you feel "strange" or "jittery". If so, then stop taking it.

### *Endone*

This is NOT to be taken regularly – it is a strong pain killer for use if the other medications are not completely controlling your pain. Just take it if and when you need it – often this may be at night.  
Take 5 or 10 mg up to every 6 hours if you are over 50 years old and 5 or 10 mg up to every 2 hours if you are under 50.  
Stop taking this if you have severe nausea.

Strong pain-killers can make you constipated. I advise you also ask your chemist for laxatives such as coloxyl with senna and start on these as soon as you leave hospital.

If these medications make you nauseated, decrease the dose. If you have any other symptoms such as abdominal pain you will need to also decrease the dose or stop the medication completely.

Other measures to control your pain are – heat or ice packs, positioning your arm in a comfortable position, use of pain pump (if one has been inserted) and gentle exercises of your hand, wrist and elbow.

## **SHOULDER EXERCISES**

The following is a guide regarding the exercises you should have after your surgery. It is very important to do these *gently* – only go to the limit of your pain and not beyond. The physiotherapist will give you assistance with these exercises and may give you some additional ones as well.

Each exercise should be done three times a day. You should do five of each exercise but decrease this if it is making your shoulder too sore.

### **Hand, Wrist and Elbow Exercises**

Take your arm out of the sling. Bend and straighten you elbow. Then move your wrist around to make a circle. Spread your fingers out then make a fist.

### **Neck Exercises**

Gently bend your neck forward, backwards and side to side.

### **Pendulum Exercises**

Take your arm out of the sling and let it hang down with your elbow straight. Bend slightly forward and move your arm around gently in a small circle. This is illustrated in figure 1.

### **External Rotation Exercises**

Take your arm out of the sling and rotate your arm to outwards with your elbow tucked into your side and your forearm parallel to the floor. Stop when your hand is straight out in front of you. This is illustrated in figure 2.

### **Forward Flexion Exercises**

Take the back strap off the sling. With your arm still in the sling swing your arm forward but stop just before it gets parallel to the floor.



Figure 1



Figure 2

## **RECOVERY FROM YOUR SURGERY**

Unfortunately shoulder surgery has a long recovery period. It may take as long as three *months* before you are really pleased you had the surgery and you may still be improving for a year or more. This long recovery period can be very frustrating but luckily shoulder surgery is associated with very good results – well over 90% of patients achieve an excellent result.

You will usually see me in my rooms about two weeks after surgery. There, I will check your wounds and ensure that your recovery is going as planned. Generally you will not need to see a physiotherapist at that stage and instead will continue your home exercises. I will arrange for you to visit a physiotherapist about 6 weeks after your surgery.

As previously mentioned, you will need to stay in a sling for 6 weeks. This means that most people need to take 6-8 weeks off work. You may hold very light things provided your hand stays in the sling.

After 6 weeks you can discard your sling. However the shoulder will still be quite stiff. It is important to stretch this out *very slowly* – I prefer that some stiffness remains for 6 months or more to ensure that the shoulder heals fully. You will need to take at least 3 months off work if you do a heavy manual job but may go back earlier if you do only office work. You must not play sport for at least 6 months.

## **CHECKLIST FOR YOUR DISCHARGE FROM HOSPITAL**

Appointment to see me approximately two weeks after your surgery

Physiotherapist to see you before discharge to help with exercises

Pain killing medications, advice sheet for pain pump if you have one

Laxatives

Sling

Supply of dressings

Please contact me if you have any questions either before or after your surgery.