

Universal Instructions following Shoulder Surgery

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Basic guidelines:

- All patients undergoing shoulder surgery receive Interscalene block anaesthesia (an injection in to the nerves at the base of the neck and above the collar bone). This ensures adequate, pain free, rehabilitation following surgery. My anaesthetic colleagues administer this under ultrasound guidance and therefore the injection is directed at the appropriate nerves.
- Following most shoulder operations, I encourage patients to mobilise the shoulder and elbows.
- While patients receive a sling/brace, this is mainly for support and to rest between exercises.
- Exceptions: rotator cuff repair (mainly large tears)
 total joint replacements
 Bankart & capsulolabral repairs/SLAP tears

These must use the brace/sling for at least 4 – 6 weeks and at night. The range of movements that are allowed will be indicated in the relevant section for each.

- Begin passive-assisted and active-assisted exercises for the first 2 weeks.
- Progress to increasing range of motion exercises at 6 weeks.
- Strengthening exercises can begin after 6-8 weeks.

Postoperative Goals:

- To achieve a pain free shoulder after surgery
- Discuss appropriate physiotherapy protocols
- Expectations and outcome from surgery to be explained
- Provide advice on driving/return to work
- Discharge home when safe and comfortable

Advice on Dressings

- Majority of the patients following arthroscopy DO NOT have stitches, and if they do, these are dissolving and DO NOT need removal.
- If there is any soakage, a dressing can be reapplied prior to discharge
- The bulky dressing can be changed at 48-72 hours.
- The wounds are cleaned and either Mepore or Tegaderm dressings are applied over the arthroscopic portals sites. These being waterproof, one can shower
- There are no special precautions. Change dressings only if needed/soiled
- Report to the hospital or doctor if there is foul discharge or sudden spiking of temperature, feeling hot and cold (indicating possible infection)

Return to Work & Driving

- This would be dependent on the type of operation and is individualised

- Majority will need at least 2 weeks off work
- Following Bankart repairs, shoulder joint replacements, SLAP repairs I advice up to 6 weeks off heavy physical work.
- Driving can be permitted if there is no shoulder pain or restriction of movements

What to expect following shoulder surgery

- It often takes 3 to 6 months to obtain reasonable use and comfort. Full recovery may take up to 12 months.
- Patience during the healing process and diligent physiotherapy is essential.

Rehabilitation Phases

Generally, this involves 3 phases (and can be thought of in intervals of 6 weeks).

Phase 1:

- consists of exercises (static) that keep the muscles functioning. The first 2 weeks
- increasing movements – mainly abduction moving arm outwards), external rotation (turning arm out with elbow by the side), internal rotation (movement in the opposite direction) and flexion (forward and upward movement).

Phase 2:

- Involves increasing range of movements
- Assisted movements with the good arm

Phase 3:

- Begin strengthening exercises, usually after 6-8 weeks
- Building strength in the rotator cuff and other group of muscles
- Core stability exercises

Your physiotherapists will guide you through the protocol following surgery.