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## General Post-Operative Instructions

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Please contact Dr. Elzinga's office by calling (403) 956-3867 during business hours for any follow-up questions or concerns.

For 24/7 nurse advice and general health information, call Health Link at 811.

### EMERGENCY/URGENT CONCERNS

For IMMEDIATE help please call 911.

For URGENT care needs, please seek medical attention at your nearest Emergency Care Centre with your Alberta Health Care card. If you live in Calgary, you may access Emergency Services at the South Health Campus, 4448 Front Street SE.

Please seek immediate medical attention for any of the following signs or symptoms:

- Chest pain
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Fever (greater than 38.5 C)
- Noticeable increase in swelling/redness/uncontrollable pain at the incision site

### DRAINS

Please record the daily output from each drain in a chart. Bring this to your follow up appointment with Dr. Elzinga. When the output from a drain is less than 30ml per day for 2 days in a row, this drain can be removed. Different drains often need to be removed at different times. Please call your homecare nurse (if available), Dr. Elzinga's office (403) 956-3867, your family doctor, or go to a walk-in clinic for drain removal.

### GARMENTS

Please purchase any necessary post-operative garments if requested by Dr. Elzinga. For example, a post-surgical bra, a compression garment for after liposuction, etc. Garments can be purchased online (for example, ClearPointMedical.com or Marena.com) or in-store, for example:

Compassionate Beauty, 26-22 Richard Way SW, Calgary, Alberta, T3E 7M9

Phone: (403) 686-6936      [caring@compassionatebeauty.com](mailto:caring@compassionatebeauty.com)

Open Mon-Fri 10am-5pm, closed weekends - Appointments recommended

### FOLLOW UP

Please book your post-operative follow up appointment with Dr. Elzinga's office by calling (403) 956-3867. Your follow up appointment will generally be 2-6 weeks after surgery at South Health Campus. Please call the office after surgery if you need to be seen sooner than your scheduled follow up appointment.

South Health Campus, 4448 Front Street SE, Calgary Alberta, T3M 1M4

Phone: (403) 956-3867

## **PAIN CONTROL**

Unless you have an allergy or a medical contraindication, please take **naproxen (Aleve) 220 mg twice a day** (or a similar anti-inflammatory medication ex. Advil) **AND Tylenol Arthritis (acetaminophen) three times a day**, whether you are hurting or not. Taking it whether it hurts or not keeps a baseline of anti-inflammatory medication in your blood, heading off pain before it occurs. Continue this for two or so days after surgery, until you feel you do not need it.

- Any brand of acetaminophen is OK as long as it is the long-acting version. "Extra-strength" acetaminophen is not the same thing and is not the right drug.
- Do not take more than 4000 mg of acetaminophen in 24 hours.
- Naproxen is a non-steroid, non-narcotic, non-addicting anti-inflammatory medication that significantly reduces swelling, inflammation, and pain. Taking this medication greatly decreases the need for addictive, opioid pain medication after surgery. Do not take more naproxen than 440 mg in 12 hours or 660 mg in 24 hours.
- Naproxen and acetaminophen can be safely be taken together, they do not cross-react.

Opioid medications can also be taken safely in combination with naproxen and acetaminophen for stronger pain relief for the first 1-2 days after surgery. Try to take as little opioid pain medication as possible (e.g. codeine, oxycodone). Use the opioid medications if needed in the first 24-48 hours, mostly for sleep, and then try to transition to naproxen and acetaminophen.

Do not take anti-inflammatories (naproxen) if you have had previous bariatric surgery, a gastrointestinal (stomach) ulcer, or if you have kidney disease. Please check with Dr. Elzinga or your family doctor if you are not sure if it is safe for you to take Tylenol or naproxen.

## **Constipation after Surgery**

Please eat high-fiber foods, drink plenty of water, and move around after surgery to minimize constipation. Opioids contribute to constipation.

Consider taking Laxaday every day for a week or more after surgery to prevent constipation. This is an over-the-counter medication. Your pharmacist can help you find additional stool softeners if needed.

## **Information about Pain After Surgery**

- Remember: Pain is part of the normal healing process after surgery.
- The pain will improve day-by-day.
- To get the work done we have cut through healthy tissue. Your body needs time to heal.
- The first few days are the worst. Things will continue to heal and improve the entire next year.
- If you're not sure about your pain level, check with your surgeon for reassurance and to rule out a rare problem.
- The evidence is strong: the best pain reliever is peace of mind. So check on any concerns, then settle in as your body makes its way through the healing process.
- Tingling, shooting sparks, electrical shocks, and other nerve pains are all normal after surgery and will gradually improve. Opioids do not relieve these sensations.
- There are 2 kinds of pain with any operation:
  1. The pain of the cut – This pain lasts 1-5 days. Please take acetaminophen and naproxen for this pain.
  2. The pain of "Doctor, it only hurts when I move" - once you only have this pain, stop taking pain medications. Listen to your body and avoid movements that cause pain. Your pain is your friend, indicating that you need to stop and give your body time to rest and heal.
- After nerve decompression surgery, for example carpal or cubital tunnel release, most of the pain should improve. If your numbness was constant (there all the time) before the surgery, you may not get all of your feeling back or it may take a long time (months to years) for all of the feeling to come back.

## Getting comfortable

Try one or more of the following:

- For arm or leg surgery, elevate the surgical area above the level of the heart, as much as possible. Use multiple pillows to elevate your affected limb while sleeping. This will help prevent excess swelling and pain.
- Apply ice (bag of ice wrapped in a towel; 10 minutes on, 5 minutes off, repeat).
- Do not “baby” your affected area but do not do what hurts. If you try to do something and it hurts, don’t try it again for 2-3 days. Healing takes days and weeks, not hours. Your body is very clever and will tell you what you can and cannot do. But the only language it speaks is pain and you can’t hear it with pain medications in your ears.
- Gently move your unaffected joints to prevent stiffness.
- Please use massage to help with sore areas after surgery. Massage the areas gently with your fingers. This can help with nerve pain and irritation, for example, areas that are painful and sensitive to touch as well as feelings of burning, shooting, and itching pain. Massage will help desensitize these areas, decreasing pain.

## When should I get concerned?

- Pain makes us wonder if everything is OK.
- Problems after surgery are uncommon. Your surgeon can tell you what to look for.
- If you think you might have a problem, call or page your surgeon or the plastic surgeon on-call.
- Redness on or around your incision is normal. Redness about the width of your thumb is normal. It is your body’s inflammatory process for healing. Real infection is rare and has redness spreading beyond the incision and surgical area, with more and more pain in the incision instead of less and less pain, fever, chills, and real pus coming out of the wound (as opposed to a little clear, yellow, or red liquid or blood in the first 3 days which is normal).

## Learning more about managing pain

- To learn more about managing pain and pain medication, go to MyHealth.Alberta.ca and enter “pain” into the search box.
- There are other ways to manage pain without using pain medication. These non-medicine therapies may help a lot with your pain after the surgery. To learn more about other non-medicine ways to manage pain, go to MyHealth.Alberta.ca and enter “complementary medicine” into the search box.
- For 24/7 nurse advice and general health information, call Health Link at 811.

To learn more about pain expectations, management, and relief, you can view these videos:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tt52qS5Zttk&feature=youtu.be>

<https://www.csaq.org/public-education/safe-opioid-use>

## ACTIVITY

Please avoid heavy lifting for 6 weeks after surgery.

## Non-Opioid Pain Relief

$$1 + 1 = 3$$

The combination of an extended release Tylenol (acetaminophen) combined with a long acting arthritis/pain medication like Aleve (naproxen) acts synergistically. It is like 1+1=3.



Same medication, different boxes

Extended release- 8 hours plus

Take 1 tablet every 8 hours  
Do not exceed 6 tablets per day



# PLUS

Take 1 tablet of naproxen (Aleve)  
every 12 hours  
Do not exceed 3 tablets per day



# Safe Use, Storage, and Disposal of Prescription Opioid Medicines

Prescription drug abuse is a serious public health issue.

Opioids reduce pain for a short time, but can be dangerous if used improperly.

## Safe Use

Improper use of pain medicine is a leading cause of accidental death

- Combining opioids with alcohol or other drugs increases the risk of death
- Take medications only as prescribed
- Never take more than instructed
- Never take somebody else's medicine
- Never give or sell your medicine to someone else
- Combining opioids with medicines used to calm anxiety can result in overdose
- Using opioids for something other than pain (anxiety, sleep, fear of pain, to feel good) can create a harmful dependence/addiction

## Safe Storage

Unused medicines in your home are at risk for inappropriate use

- Pain relievers are a leading cause of serious poisoning of children and pets when they are left where others can get them
- Hide or lock up opioid medications to avoid access by family, friends, or houseguests
- Keep prescription medications in their original packaging so it is clear for whom the medications were prescribed and to save the directions for appropriate use

## Safe Disposal

Place unused opioids in a disposal unit in a pharmacy or police station.

If no medicine take-back program is available in your area, follow these steps to dispose of most medicines in the household trash:

- Mix medicines (do NOT crush tablets or capsules) with an unpalatable substance such as kitty litter or used coffee grounds;
- Place the mixture in a container such as a sealed plastic bag; and
- Throw the container in your household trash.
- Before throwing out your empty pill bottle or other empty medicine packaging, remember to scratch out all information on the label to make it unreadable.

*This material is for information purposes only. It should not be used in place of medical advice, instruction, or treatment.  
If you have questions, talk with your doctor or appropriate healthcare provider.*