



**EVANGELISTA ORTHOPEDIC CLINIC**

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## **Discharge Instructions**

### **Wound Care**

- Do not change your surgical dressing. This will be done at your next follow-up visit
- Change your dressing daily starting 2-3 days after surgery, inspecting your wound once daily. Place a dry, clean gauze pad over your incision daily
- You may begin showering \_\_\_\_\_ days after surgery. Do not immerse your incision in water, such as a pool, hot tub or bath
  - Watch for signs and symptoms of infection which may include: Increased redness or warmth around your surgical area, drainage from your incision, increase in pain, or fevers greater than 101.5°. If any of these arise, please contact our office

### **Splint or Cast Care**

If you are discharged with a cast or splint, it is important to take good care of it. This dressing must remain dry at all times. If the casting material becomes wet, it may shrink becoming tight on your extremity and could cause skin breakdown, putting you at risk for an infection. Also, do not stick anything down your dressing to scratch your skin. Elevate the extremity throughout the day to decrease swelling and discomfort. If your splint or cast becomes tight and/or painful, notify your surgeon immediately. This is important and must be addressed. When you are immobilized in a cast or splint, you should refrain from putting any weight on the affected extremity, including walking, standing or carrying objects if your arm is immobilized.

### **Blood Clot Prevention**

Most patients will be discharged from the hospital on a “blood thinner”. This is taken to prevent blood clots from forming. There are several different types of blood thinning medications that may be used including Lovenox™, Aspirin, and Coumadin™. If prescribed Lovenox™, this injectable medication will need to be continued for several weeks after surgery. If prescribed Aspirin, this should be taken orally twice daily with food. Please attempt to find Ecotrin™, which is a brand of aspirin with an enteric coating to protect your stomach. If you experience an upset stomach or increase in acid reflux while taking Aspirin please notify your physician immediately. If prescribed Coumadin™, this medication requires close monitoring with weekly blood draws. Follow the instructions given to you by your provider. Both Coumadin™ and Aspirin should be taken for 6 weeks after surgery.

Orthopedic patients are at increased risk of forming blood clots, most commonly in their lower extremities. Watch for signs and symptoms of blood clots which may include: swelling, pain, redness, low grade fevers or confusion. A systemic complication of a peripheral blood clot is a pulmonary embolism, when a small piece of clot dislodges and travels to the lung. This may cause shortness of breath, heart palpitations or chest pain, especially while taking a deep breath. If any of these arise, present to the emergency room immediately.



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### **Pain Medications**

After a major orthopedic procedure, most patients will require prescription pain medications, including narcotics, to treat their post-operative pain. Medications such as Percocet™ (Oxycodone) and Vicodin™ (Hydrocodone), are controlled narcotic pain medications that need to be monitored closely. With chronic use, they pose a risk for addiction. Patients should treat their pain only as needed with these medications and wean off of the narcotics in the first few weeks following surgery. If you were taking narcotic pain medications before surgery it may take a few weeks longer to wean off of your pain medication. These medications can cause many side effects, which may include nausea, lightheadedness, confusion, sedation, urinary retention, and constipation. To avoid constipation please take an over the counter stool softener such as Docusate™ or Senna™.

If you require a refill on your narcotic pain medication please notify your surgeon early. Federal law prohibits the renewal or refill of most narcotic pain medications by phone, therefore requiring a written prescription. Please allow sufficient time for your surgeon to complete a new prescription that needs to be picked up at the office during normal office hours. Narcotic pain medications can not be renewed after hours or on weekend. If you have questions regarding your prescriptions, pain, or find that your pain is not relieved by your prescription medications, notify your surgeon.

Acetaminophen (Tylenol™) is a strong pain reliever that is used in the hospital. You should continue this medication after discharge unless there is a contraindication to its use. No more than 4000mg of Acetaminophen should be taken in a 24 hour period. Almost all of the narcotic pain medications have Acetaminophen in them so be very careful combining the two. Often Acetaminophen alone is strong enough to treat post-operative pain or can be used as a supplement to wean off the narcotic pain relievers. **Do not supplement with any over the counter non-steroidal anti-inflammatory (NSAID) medications such as Ibuprofen™, Aleve™, Advil™, Naprosyn™ or Motrin™. Anti-inflammatories have been shown to slow down or inhibit bone and tendon healing.**

### **Mobility and Gait Aids**

Follow your surgeon's instructions regarding weight bearing on your affected extremity.

- Non weight-bearing  Toe touch only (no weight)
- Partial weight-bearing \_\_\_\_\_pounds  Weight-bearing as tolerated

If you were instructed to use a gait aid, do so after discharge.

### **Activity**

You will receive therapy instructions before your discharge from your therapist. Please follow these recommendations. Allow time minimum of three times a day to actively work on your therapy at home. Some patients may also benefit from outpatient physical therapy or inpatient rehabilitation and this will be discussed on an individual basis. Remain as active as possible after your surgery or hospitalization, within limits of your weight bearing status. If you need any assistance with setting up appointments, please contact our office.



**EVANGELISTA ORTHOPEDIC CLINIC**

**Follow-up**

Call for an appointment after your discharge for \_\_\_\_\_.

If you have any questions or concerns after discharge in regards to your orthopedic problem please feel free to contact our office at **480-656-0291**.