



Patient & Family Guide
2021

After Orthopedic Day Surgery



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After Orthopedic Day Surgery

This pamphlet will answer some of your questions about your care at home.

What did I have done?

The name of my surgery is:

Important information about my surgery:

Follow-up care

Follow-up appointment:

- Yes
- No

Doctor: _____

Date (if known): _____

Orthopedic Clinic

4th floor, Halifax Infirmary
1796 Summer Street
Halifax, NS B3H 3A7
Phone: 902-473-4166

How will I feel right after surgery?

- After surgery, most people feel tired and have some overall soreness or pain. Your muscles may be stiff or sore.
- You may feel sick to your stomach.
- Your health care team will try to keep you as comfortable as possible.

What can I do to help myself?

- Rest for the first 24 hours (1 day) after your surgery. You may get up and walk around (unless your surgeon says not to). **Ask for help the first time you get up.**
- You may feel dizzy or weak. This is normal.
- Medications like anesthetic (medication to put you to sleep, or to freeze or numb a part of your body) used during surgery can limit your movement and slow your reaction time.
- After surgery:
 - › Have an adult stay with you overnight and for the first 24 hours after surgery.
 - › **Do not drive a car or operate machinery for 24 hours.**
 - › **Do not sign any legal documents or important papers for 24 hours.**
 - › **Do not drink alcohol for 24 hours.**

- › **You should NOT be responsible for small children or be a main caregiver for 24 hours.**

If you have questions or concerns about your anesthesia care, call 902-473-4326. If no one answers, leave a confidential voicemail and your call will be returned.

When can I eat?

- Follow the instructions given to you by your nurse or surgeon.
- It may take time before you feel like eating again. When you are able, it is best to start with clear juices, pop, tea, clear soups, crackers, or toast.
- The day after your surgery, you may start to eat your usual foods again.
- Remember to eat slowly.
- Eating well-balanced, healthy meals will help your body heal and get stronger after surgery.
- **Do not drink alcohol for 24 hours.**

Pain

- It is normal to have pain after surgery.
- You may be given a prescription for pain medication. The health care team will teach you how to use your medication. When you go home, follow the instructions on the label.
- **Do not drink alcohol while taking pain pills.**
- **Do not drive while taking pain pills.**
- If you do not have a prescription for pain medication, you may take acetaminophen (Tylenol®), as needed. Always follow the instructions on the label.
- It is normal to have some swelling for 3 to 5 days after surgery.
 - › Using an ice pack (or a bag of frozen vegetables) can help with pain and swelling. Always wrap the ice pack in something (like a towel) before placing it against your body. **Do not put ice directly on your skin.**
 - › Do this every 4 hours while you are awake. Do not use for longer than 30 minutes at a time. **Make sure you keep the area dry.** Continue while you have swelling (3 to 5 days).

- If you had surgery on your arm, hand, leg, or foot, place the operated limb on pillows, resting above the level of your heart. This should help with pain, aching, or throbbing.

When can I drive?

- **Do not drive a car for 24 hours after surgery.**
- **Do not drive until you are pain-free and can do so comfortably.** Pain can limit your movements and reaction time.
- **Do not drive while taking narcotics (painkillers).**
- Follow the instructions given to you by your surgeon.

When can I go back to work?

Ask your surgeon when it is safe for you to go back to work.

When can I have sex?

You can have sex when you feel well enough. If you have questions, talk with your surgeon during your follow-up appointment or your primary health care provider.

What if I have diagnosed sleep apnea?

For ALL sleep apnea patients:

- Sleep in a semi-upright position (leaning back slightly propped up by extra pillows) or on your side for the first 24 hours after surgery.
Do not sleep lying flat on your back.
- Tell your health care provider if you have sleep apnea before taking any prescribed or over-the-counter pain medications.
- **Do not drink alcohol.**
- Use your dental device while sleeping if you used it before surgery.
- **If your pain gets worse and it is not helped by prescribed pain medication, call your surgeon or go to the nearest Emergency Department.**

If you use a CPAP machine:

- Use your CPAP machine whenever you are sleeping.
- Use your CPAP machine when you are resting or napping during the day while taking pain medication.

Activity

- Allowed up as comfortable
- Keep your operated limb raised up
- No weight bearing on operated limb
- Use crutches or a cane
- Partial weight bearing with crutches

Do not do any strenuous (hard) exercises or activity until after your follow-up appointment with your surgeon.

If you do not have a follow-up appointment booked, call the Clinic at 902-473-4166 to schedule one.

Dressing

- Leave in place until your next appointment
- Can be removed after _____ days
- **Do not shower for _____ days.**
- After _____ days, with a properly covered cast or dressing, you may take a shower. For best results, buy a cast cover for your arm or leg at a local pharmacy. You may also try wrapping a plastic bag over your cast or dressing.
- **Do not have a bath, soak in a tub, or swim until after your follow-up appointment with your surgeon.**

If you have stitches or staples:

- Your stitches or staples can be removed after _____ days:
 - By your primary health care provider
 - By your surgeon

You may have Steri-Strips™ (strips of cloth tape) on your incision (cut). You may cover them with a bandage so your clothing does not rub your incision. Leave them on for 7 to 10 days or until they fall off.

Things to watch for:

If you have bleeding:

- Place your hand over the dressing and press firmly.
- Place your affected limb up on pillows above the level of your heart, if possible.
- Rest quietly until the bleeding stops.
- **If you have severe (very bad) bleeding that does not stop, go to the nearest Emergency Department right away.**

Call your surgeon, primary health care provider, or 811 right away if you have:

- Fever (temperature above 38.5° C/101.3° F) or chills for more than 4 hours that are not controlled with acetaminophen (Tylenol®)
- Drainage from the incision that has a bad smell
- Edges of the incision come apart
- More redness, swelling, or warmth around the incision. Note: some redness around the incision is a normal part of the healing process.
- Numbness or tingling in your operated limb
- Unusual colour, such as white or blue fingers or toes, on your operated limb
- Pain that is not helped by medication

Signs of a blood clot:

- Redness, swelling, warmth, or pain in either leg that does not go away with movement or massage
- Shortness of breath
- Pain in your chest

If you cannot reach your surgeon's office or your primary health care provider, call 811 or go to the nearest Emergency Department right away.

