

**POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS**

# Distal Biceps Tendon Repair

Distal Biceps Tendon Repair (Elbow)

Questions or a problem after surgery? Call Dr. Wichman's office at **414-479-7000**.

## Diet

1. Begin with clear liquids and light foods (jello, soup, toast, etc...)
2. Progress slowly back to your pre-op diet as tolerated
3. Try to avoid taking narcotics on an empty stomach to avoid nausea

## Wound Care

1. Take good care of your operative dressing and splint. You may loosen the bandage if hand or finger swelling occurs.
2. It is normal for the elbow to bleed slightly and swell after surgery.
3. If blood soaks through the dressing, do not panic. Reinforce with additional dressings as needed.
4. If steri-strips are present, they should remain in place until your first post-operative visit.
5. Keep your dressing and splint clean and dry. Cover with waterproof bandages for showering. NO immersion of the arm in water (i.e., bath).

## Medications

1. Pain medication is injected into the wound and elbow during surgery. This will wear off in approximately 8-12 hours from surgery.
2. Most patients will require a short period of narcotic pain medication. This should be taken as directed on the bottle.
3. Norco (hydrocodone/Tylenol) or Percocet (oxycodone/Tylenol)
4. Take 1-2 tablets every 4-6 hours as needed for pain.
5. Maximum of 12 pills per 24 hour period.
6. Do NOT take additional Tylenol (acetaminophen) while taking these medications. Many products contain this medication (cough meds, cold meds) and can lead to liver damage.
7. Common side effects of narcotic pain medications are nausea, drowsiness, and constipation. Use a stool softener (Colace, senokot) or laxative (Miralax) as needed.
8. If you are having problems with nausea and vomiting, call the office to see if the medication should be changed or additional medications prescribed.
9. Journavx (suzetrigine): If you were prescribed Journavx, take 2 tablets (your one-time starting dose) with a small sip of water before leaving home the morning of surgery. Then take 1 tablet every 12 hours, starting 12 hours after your first dose, as directed. Take the starting dose on an empty stomach, and avoid grapefruit while taking this medication.
10. Do not drive a car or operate heavy machinery while taking narcotics.

## Activity

1. When resting, keep the arm elevated on a pillow to reduce swelling.
2. Do NOT actively bend the elbow or twist your palm up and down against resistance during the early healing phase — these motions stress the repair.
3. Avoid lifting anything heavier than a coffee cup with the operative arm until cleared by your surgeon.
4. No driving until cleared by your medical team.
5. You may return to sedentary, one-handed work within a few days if pain is tolerable.

## Brace

1. You will be placed in a splint at about 90° for the first 5-7 days, then transitioned to a hinged elbow brace.
2. The brace range is advanced gradually as directed by your surgeon — typically protecting against full straightening early while allowing protected motion.
3. Wear the brace as instructed; do not adjust the settings yourself.

## Sling

1. A sling is provided to rest and protect the arm. Wear it as directed, removing it only for hygiene and prescribed exercises.

## Ice Therapy

1. Begin immediately after surgery
2. Use ice packs every 2 hours for 20 minutes (keep ice off the dressing/splint and protect the skin to avoid frostbite).

## Exercise

1. Begin gentle range-of-motion of the shoulder, wrist, and hand on the first post-operative day, about 2-3 times daily.
2. Do NOT perform active elbow bending or resisted forearm rotation until cleared (typically around 6 weeks).
3. Formal physical therapy will be discussed at your first post-operative visit and progressed by protocol; strengthening typically begins around 8-12 weeks, with return to heavy lifting and sport around 4-6 months.

## When to Call Us

**Contact Dr. Wichman at 414-479-7000 if any of the following are present:**

- Painful swelling or numbness
- Unrelenting pain
- Redness around incisions
- Fever (above 101.5°F) - It is not uncommon to have a low-grade fever for the first day or two following surgery.
- Color changes in fingers, hand, or arm
- Continuous drainage or bleeding from incisions (a small amount of drainage is expected.)
- Difficulty breathing
- Excessive nausea or vomiting

*If you have an emergency after hours or over the weekend, call 414-479-7000 to be connected to the "on-call" physician or physician assistant. Do NOT call the hospital or surgery center.*

*If you have an emergency that requires immediate attention, call 911 or proceed to the nearest Emergency Room.*