

## **Postoperative Instructions – Arm Lift**

**Postop Assistance** – You are required to have a Responsible Adult with you for the first night at home. Do not walk unaccompanied if you feel faint.

**Food & Drink** – Eat a light meal when you get home (like soup and a drink) then gradually return to a full diet. Eating a large meal might cause nausea & vomiting.

### **Medications**

- You will be advised about medication use by Dr. Andrade and his staff, then the nurse in the Postop Recovery Room will review all of these medications and their dosing schedule with you and your Responsible Adult. Most medications can be restarted the day after your surgery but some medications (anxiety or sleep medications, antidepressants, etc) might interact with the pain medications you were prescribed, and cause excessive sedation or respiratory depression.
- All narcotics cause constipation and/or nausea. We recommend taking over-the-counter (OTC) medications like Senokot for constipation and Gravol for nausea, but you may substitute other medications if you prefer. If you do not have a bowel movement within 3 days postop you will need to use an OTC rectal suppository.

**Alcohol & Recreational Drugs** – These can interfere with your prescription narcotic pain medications, leading to excessive sedation. Do not drink alcohol or use recreational drugs while taking your prescribed medications.

**Driving** – Do not drive a vehicle or perform other tasks that require skill or judgement for at least 24 hours after surgery, while taking narcotic medication, or if you are having pain and do not feel you can concentrate.

**Sleep** – You may sleep in any position that is comfortable. There may be less swelling if you try to keep your arms elevated on pillows for at least 48 hours postop while sleeping or resting.

**Wound Care** – Keep your postoperative dressing intact for at least 48 hours after surgery (longer if you wish provided it is clean and dry), then you may remove the dressing and shower. When you remove the outer dressing, you will notice a strip of mesh tape (Prineo) adherent to the incision. Leave this tape alone when you shower, as it can get wet. Remove the tape after 2-3 weeks, or sooner if it is no longer adherent. Sometimes there is drainage from the wound for several days after surgery so we will provide extra dressings to apply over the existing dressings if necessary. Please call the office at any time if you have any questions about wound care, and the nurses will be happy to provide advice. You are welcome to come to the clinic for dressing changes if you prefer.

**Showering** – You may shower as early as 2 days after surgery if you wish. Your outer dressings must be removed before you shower, but leave the underlying strip of mesh tape alone. Never soak in a bathtub, hot tub, or swimming pool for at least several weeks, until your incisions are fully healed with no drainage or scabs.

**Ice Packs** – You may apply cool packs to the arms to help reduce swelling and discomfort if you wish. Apply and remove them every 20 minutes to avoid frostbite.

**Compression Garment** – We provide a compression garment to some patients, depending on the amount of postoperative bruising and swelling. This can be worn much of the time for 4-6 weeks. If you find the compression garment uncomfortable you can remove it for periods of time, or ask staff about using your own garment.

**Activity & Exercise** – It is ok to do light activities of daily living right after surgery, such as personal care, making meals, and walking around your house. However, avoid tasks that involve repetitive use of the arms for at least 2 weeks, or until your wounds are fully healed. Most patients return to rigorous exercise and sports by 6 weeks after surgery.

**Sexual Intercourse** – You may resume sexual activity when it is comfortable to do so. However, it is critical to keep the surgical incisions very clean and avoid direct pressure or chafing to the upper arms while they are healing.

**Scar Care** – We provide a sample of scar gel to start you off with a good scar treatment protocol. At around 2-3 weeks postop, once the Prineo mesh has been removed from the incision and there are no small open wounds or scabs, you can apply the scar gel daily and gently massage the scar. Some patients prefer to purchase and use their own silicone strips, which are an excellent alternative.

**Sun Tanning** – Avoid direct exposure to the scar for at least 6 months by wearing a garment or applying high SPF sun tan lotion.

### **Monitoring for Complications**

- Uncommonly, a blood clot called deep vein thrombosis (**DVT**) can dislodge and go to the lungs, causing a life-threatening breathing complication (pulmonary embolism, PE). If you develop one-sided calf pain and swelling, chest pain when taking a deep breath, or shortness of breath you should go to the emergency department for assessment.
- Contact us and/or seek urgent medical attention if one arm becomes much more painful, bruised or swollen than the other, as this could be due to bleeding (hematoma)
- Monitor for signs of infection like spreading redness, firmness and tenderness of the skin, increasing warmth, wound discharge or fever.
- Compartment syndrome is a serious problem in which the normal blood flow in a limb is disrupted, which can lead to permanent loss of function. It is characterized by excessive pain, swelling, numbness, weakness, and/or colour changes in the limb. If you develop these symptoms, you must contact us and/or seek emergency medical attention immediately.
- Inform our office if you require treatment at a hospital emergency department for any reason within 10 days after surgery.

### **Frequently-Asked Questions:**

***When will the swelling go down?*** – The majority of swelling typically resolves by 6 weeks but intermittent swelling during exercise can occur for months.

***When can I return to work?*** – Please discuss your exact job with Dr. Andrade so he can make specific recommendations. Most patients return to light work within 2-3 weeks. For jobs that involve repetitive use of the arms or lifting more than 10kg, less strenuous modified duties may be necessary for 6 weeks.

***Is arm lift surgery painful?*** – Many patients find that their pain is well-controlled by taking a combination of non-narcotic medications like Tylenol (acetaminophen) and Celebrex (celecoxib). However, some patients will require a narcotic pain medication like Dilaudid (hydromorphone) for several days. It is not uncommon to get occasional, brief pain, burning or pulling sensations for several months postoperatively.