

Distal Radius ORIF

Home Care Instructions

Most wrist fracture surgery is fairly quick, and a majority of patients get back to baseline. The incision is small, but since the hands are so richly innervated and are the main way in which we interact with our environments, even a small incision can be bothersome for some time.

-Dr. Michael C. Russonella

- Splint** You will be placed in a splint. This will be left in place for the first two weeks and should be worn at all times. If it becomes wet or severely soiled it must be changed.
- Diet & Activity** Resume your normal diet as tolerated. Go home and rest today. If you received sedation or general anesthesia, you may feel tired and drowsy. Therefore, you should not drive a car, operate machinery, drink alcoholic beverages or make any legal decisions for 24 hours. Some operative site sensitivity is normal after any hand surgery; this most commonly presents as sensitive to temperature extremes.
- Pain Medication** Resume all medications as prescribed unless specifically prohibited by myself or your primary care doctor in the post-op period. Do not drive, make significant life decision while taking narcotic medication; it will impair your abilities. Avoid NSAID containing products (ie, Motrin, Ibuprofen, Celebrex, Advil) for the first 2-3 weeks. They may interfere with fracture healing. The first 24-48 hours after surgery are the worst in terms of pain; use pain medication as needed. You may also use pain medication when you feel comfortable. Some patient's report having pain after surgery that is quite manageable, other patients report a significant amount of discomfort. The response to the surgery over the first 5 days is quite individual. Do not hesitate to take 2 tablets of the pain medication every 3 hours if needed. Of course, rest, ice and taking it easy for the first few days will have a significant impact on your recovery. The pain medication causes constipation; drink plenty of fluids, apple juice and prune juice as needed. If you do not have a bowel movement within 5 days drink ½ bottle of magnesium citrate, which is sold at the pharmacy. The pain medication prescribed is a large dose of Tylenol with a small dose of narcotic. If you cannot tolerate the medication, take Tylenol dosed according to the bottle recommendations until a different pain medication can be prescribed. Take the antibiotics as prescribed if an implant (ie, plate, pins) was used in your surgery. Also take 2000mg Vitamin C until wound is fully healed.
- Showering** You may shower once the dressing has been removed, unless otherwise directed by your physician. Do not use a hot tub, bath, or go swimming until the doctor clears you to do so.
- Wound Care & Dressing** Keep affected hand elevated higher than the heart when possible. This will help greatly with swelling and pain. Use the sling for comfort during transit. Keep the dressing/cast clean and dry. If it becomes wet or soiled, report to the office for a cast change. Leaving a wet or soiled cast in place can predispose to infection. Cast/splint will be removed, and dressing changed at your first post-op visit. Sutures will be removed at that time. Apply ice NOT heat. Heat will increase pain/swelling. Do not apply creams or salves to the wound; this can increase the risk of infection.
- Ice** Ice is an excellent source of relief of pain, swelling, stiffness, and inflammation. Use it as often as 15-20 minutes three times a day. You may continue to use ice several weeks following surgery. **DO NOT USE HEAT!**
- Return Visits** The office will call you to schedule your post-operative appointments.



Emergency

Dr. Russonella's staff is available 24 hours a day in case you experience any problems once you leave the hospital. The risk of infection is very low risk. Notify the office if you develop a fever $>101^{\circ}\text{F}$, with unusual increase in pain, redness, and warmth. Report any pus or unusual drainage to our office immediately. It could be a concern if your incisions swell or have drainage. Persistent swelling in the digits. Pain in the fingers, specifically pain unrelieved by prescribed medications or sustained pain around the thumb, index and long (but not ring and small) fingers. If you develop numbness, tingling, pale, cold or bluish color of fingers, first try to unwrap or loosen the ace bandage around your cast, as there can be significant swelling with surgery. Elevating the wrist also helps. If you encounter any problems, please call our office.

**** If you feel chest pain or shortness of breath, please go to the nearest ER for evaluation. Do not call the office or wait for an appointment; although extremely rare, this could be a blood clot in the lungs.****

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