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A member of HealthTexas Provider Network

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Distal Biceps Repair

REPAIR / RECONSTRUCTION — POSTOPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

Patient _____ **Surgery date** _____ **Side** ☐ Right ☐ Left

PROTECT THE REPAIR — THE TENDON TAKES ABOUT 6–12 WEEKS TO HEAL TO BONE

- Keep the splint on until your first post-op visit (about 7–10 days). You will then move to a hinged elbow brace.
- **Do not** lift anything with this arm — not even a cup of coffee — for 6 weeks.
- **Do not** bend the elbow or turn the palm up **against resistance** (carrying, opening jars, turning a doorknob or screwdriver) for 6 weeks.

MEDICATION

Pain medication

Narcotic/opioid medications (oxycodone, hydrocodone) are habit-forming. If needed, you will receive a one-time prescription sized for your surgery. Most patients need them for only 2–3 days; taking them longer than 6 days significantly increases the risk of dependence. **Do not drive, drink alcohol, or make important decisions while taking them.**

Take 1–2 tablets every 4–6 hours as needed for pain.

☐ Oxycodone ☐ Percocet (oxycodone/acetaminophen) ☐ Norco (hydrocodone/acetaminophen)

☐ Other _____

Tylenol (acetaminophen)

☐ You may add Tylenol 325 mg, 2 tablets every 4–6 hours. Do not exceed 3,000 mg in 24 hours *from all sources*.

☐ Do NOT take extra Tylenol — your prescribed pain medication already contains acetaminophen.

Anti-inflammatories (NSAIDs: ibuprofen/Advil/Motrin, naproxen/Aleve, meloxicam/Mobic)

NSAIDs can slow tendon and bone healing and increase bleeding risk; they are approved only for specific patients.

☐ NSAIDs approved ☐ NSAIDs **NOT** approved

Blood clot prevention

☐ **Aspirin 81 mg once daily** for 4 weeks

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☐ Lovenox _____

☐ Continue your home blood thinner

☐ No blood clot medication needed for your procedure

Nausea & constipation

You have prescriptions for **Zofran** (nausea — fill only if you have severe nausea) and **Colace** (stool softener while taking narcotics). Walking, fluids, fiber, and prune juice also help; MiraLAX is OK if no bowel movement in 2–3 days.

Other: _____

ACTIVITY & HOME EXERCISES

Ice / cold therapy

☐ **Cooling unit:** use in 4-hour intervals with 30-minute breaks for the first 1–2 weeks, then as needed. Keep a layer between the pad and your skin. **Do NOT** leave on overnight.

☐ **Ice packs:** 20 minutes on / 20 minutes off as needed for the first 2 weeks. Ice works through thick bandages even if you can't feel the cold.

Do NOT use heat on the surgical area.

Nerve block: Your arm may be numb and heavy for 12–36 hours. Keep it supported in the sling or splint and protect it — you cannot feel heat, cold, or pressure. Start your pain medication in the evening, before the block wears off.

- **Fingers:** make a full fist and fully straighten your fingers 10 times every hour you are awake to reduce swelling and stiffness.
- Move the shoulder gently (shrugs and small circles) several times a day so it does not get stiff.
- **Numbness along the outside of the forearm** is common after this surgery and usually improves over weeks to months.
- **Driving:** not while taking narcotics or wearing the splint/brace. We will clear you at a visit — typically 4–6 weeks.
- **Work:** one-handed desk work often in 1–2 weeks. Heavy lifting is restricted for about 3–4 months.

RESTRICTIONS

Weeks 0–6	No lifting, carrying, pushing, or pulling with this arm. No resisted elbow bending or palm-up twisting.
Weeks 6–12	Light lifting and strengthening as directed by your therapist.
3–4 months+	Heavy lifting and sports when cleared.

SPLINT & BRACE

☐ Splint on at all times until your first post-op visit.

☐ Hinged elbow brace after the splint is removed, for about _____ weeks. Range: extension _____° to full flexion.

☐ Sling for comfort while in the splint.

CALL US IF

- You cannot straighten (lift up) your wrist, thumb, or fingers once the nerve block has worn off — this can mean a nerve was irritated and we want to know right away.

SHOWERING & DRESSING CARE

Showering

- You may shower 2 days after surgery with the splint fully covered by a plastic bag or cast cover, sealed at the top.
- A wet splint must be replaced — call us if it gets soaked.
- **No baths, pools, or hot tubs** for 3 weeks, and until the incision is fully healed.

Dressing

- **Keep the splint on, clean, and dry until your first post-op visit.** Do not remove it or put anything inside it.
- If the splint feels too tight, your fingers swell, or they become numb, elevate the arm above your heart for 30 minutes. If this does not help, call us.

PROCEDURES PERFORMED

☐ Distal biceps repair

☐ Distal biceps reconstruction with graft: _____

☐ Other: _____

DIET

- Eat lightly the day of surgery, then advance to your regular diet. Drink plenty of non-alcoholic, caffeine-free fluids.
- A well-balanced, protein-rich diet supports healing. Avoid new supplements in the early recovery period unless cleared by your surgeon.
- If you have diabetes, check your blood sugar more often — surgery and steroids given during anesthesia can raise it.

PHYSICAL THERAPY

- ☐ You have been given a physical therapy prescription and protocol (in your post-op packet). Call a convenient location to schedule — therapy should begin within **7–10 days**. Bring the prescription and protocol to your first visit.
- ☐ You will NOT start therapy before your first post-op visit. You will receive PT instructions at that visit.

FOLLOW-UP

Your first post-operative appointment: **Date** _____ **Time** _____ **Location** _____

- To change your post-operative visit, call **469.800.7200**.
- Pain medication refills: call Monday–Friday, 8:30 am–3:00 pm. Allow 24–48 hours. Narcotic refills are not available after hours or on weekends.

WHEN TO CALL US — 469.800.7200, DAY OR NIGHT

- Fever over 101.5°F, or chills
- Redness spreading from the incision, red streaks, foul odor, or drainage that keeps increasing after day 3
- Calf pain, tenderness, or swelling
- Pain or swelling not relieved by your medication, ice, and elevation
- Hand or fingers that is cold, pale, or blue, or numbness/weakness that is worsening (mild numbness around the incisions is expected)
- Bleeding that soaks through the dressing

If you cannot reach the on-call surgeon promptly and you are concerned, go to the nearest Emergency Room.

CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY FOR CHEST PAIN OR SHORTNESS OF BREATH.

SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS

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Please read these instructions carefully before calling the office — most common questions are answered here. Thank you!