

# Prairie



## Shoulder, Elbow & Hand Center

### **Rotator Cuff Repair Home Instructions**

- Sling/immobilizer with attached pillow should be worn 24 hours/day (including sleep time) unless directed by your physician or physical therapist. Sling will usually be worn for 5-6 weeks, but check with physician or therapist before removal.
- You may shower as soon as 3 days after surgery as long as there is no drainage from any scope sites. If pain catheter is in place, wait until this is removed before showering. Bathing without getting the shoulder wet is always an alternative, such as seated at edge of tub or a sponge bath. If you had a large tear with an open incision, you must wait to shower until approved by physician.
- When sling is removed for bathing an empty 2 liter pop bottle or comparable towel roll in a zip loc bag should be used to maintain distance created by pillow between the elbow and the side of the body.
- When sitting in a chair or riding in a vehicle a pillow should be used to prop under arm and sling to support shoulder in a more comfortable position.
- Most patients find it difficult to sleep flat in bed initially. A recliner or pillows used to prop your head up is usually more comfortable. In addition always use a pillow under your arm and sling at night to support arm and prevent shoulder pain and neck strain from the neck strap. Do not sleep on the surgery shoulder for at least 6 weeks.
- Ice should be used 4-5 times/day for 15-20 min. for the first 2 weeks, and then as needed for pain or swelling. If pain catheter in place, avoid placing ice over flow valve, or wait until this has been removed to start ice regimen. A homemade reusable ice pack can be made using: 1 bottle rubbing alcohol and 2 bottles of water in a gallon zip loc freezer bag (double bag in case of leaks). The alcohol prevents the water from freezing solid and the ice pack can be molded around the shoulder. Always keep one layer of fabric between your skin and any ice pack.
- Do not attempt to lift your surgery arm away from your side at all for the first 8 weeks, or as directed by your PT or physician.
- When putting on your shirt, place your surgery arm in its sleeve first then pull it over your head followed by your non-surgery arm. Remove shirt from the unaffected arm last. Women may find it more comfortable to go without a bra for the first 2 weeks.
- Remember to relax your shoulder muscles and allow your sling to support your arm, try not to guard. Use good posture and avoid slouching.
- Keep track of pain medications to assure that you will not run out over a weekend. Talk to your doctor in advance for a prescription refill if needed. Always follow dosage instructions to prevent risk of adverse reactions.