

Thomas F. Holoavcs, MD

Patient Instructions for Arthroplasty Total Shoulder replacement

3-5 Days leading up to surgery – Please see the pre-surgery packet for more detailed information

- There are two locations for Shoulder replacement.
 - o In Boston - Please see Arthroplasty – Pre-op and post-op instructions MGH - Boston and Pre-op Arthroplasty requirements
 - o In Waltham (MGH west) – Please see Patient instructions for surgery at MGH west- Waltham and Pre-op Arthroplasty requirements
- Please set up your physical therapy appointments to begin 3-4 days after surgery.
 - o You will be provided with a Physical therapy prescription the day of surgery.

24-48 hours after surgery

- Initial post op bandages should stay on for 48 hours. These bandages are water-tight and you may shower with them on.
- After 48 hours the bandage can be removed. When showering please cover the area with plastic wrap or another water tight bandage to keep it dry for the next 7-10 days.
- The steri-strips (thin white bandages directly over the incision) should remain on the incision until they fall off on their own.
- Start passive motion on day 4 (upon discharge from the hospital). Passive ROM only.
 - o Limitations: no External Rotation beyond 30 degrees.

3-10 days after your surgery:

- Please arrange for a post-operative appointment with Dr. Holoavcs or the Physician Assistant for follow up 7-10 days post-op for additional instructions.
- Start physical therapy 3-4 days after your surgery. Passive ROM only. You will receive your physical therapy prescription on the day of surgery.
- If your PT practice requires a prescription prior to making an appointment we can fax one over with a tentative protocol. Please provide us with the fax number and contact information of the PT practice you have chosen for your therapy.

1-6 Weeks after your surgery:

- All motion with the affected/surgical arm must remain **PASSIVE**. Do not raise your arm or elbow away from your body.
 - o **No lifting, excessive stretching, supporting body weight or motion behind the back.**

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- You should remove your arm from the sling and **PASSIVELY** stretch several times per day – ask your physical therapist for appropriate stretches.
- If possible we strongly advise pool therapy starting at week 2 for increased passive range of motion. (This will be reviewed with you at your first pre-operative visit.)

6-8 Weeks after your surgery:

- Once discontinuing the use of the sling, you may begin to use your arm for activities of daily living in front of your body (eating, bathing, shaking hands...etc).
 - o Limitations: No lifting of objects heavier than 1 lb. No excessive stretching or sudden movements. No supporting body weight
- Stretch your shoulder regularly throughout the day.
- Schedule a follow up visit at 6-8 weeks after your surgery for follow up/monitoring.
- **IF APPROVED** by Dr. Holovacs, you will begin strengthening with the guidance of your physical therapist 8 weeks after your surgery.
 - o Continue to avoid lifting heavy objects.
 - o You may use your affected arm for normal daily activities involved with dressing, bathing and self care. Any forceful pushing or pulling activities are to be avoided.

*******Please keep in mind this schedule/protocol is patient dependent. Your timeline may be altered to assure appropriate progressions through rehab. Should you have any questions please feel free to call the office at (617) 726-0298*******

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ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How should I manage my wound site, dressing and steri-strips?

- You may shower with a watertight bandage in two days, but keep the incisions dry for seven to ten days. Try not to let the direct spray of water from the showerhead hit the incision.
- Remove the large surgical dressing 48 hours after surgery. Allow the steri-strips to fall off on their own (this could take up to 3 weeks).

Do I need to wear a sling/immobilizer? If so, how long do I wear it and when can I take it off during the day?

- You will be instructed by your surgeon to wear your sling for 4 weeks and the sling should be worn at all times.
- While in the sling, the elbow should be bent at a right angle, and the hand should be level with your elbow or slightly higher. The elbow should be resting slightly in front of your body.
- You may remove the sling for exercises as prescribed by the surgeon/therapist, icing, dressing, and showering.

What are my precautions regarding movements and positions after surgery? What positions should I avoid?

- Do not actively move your arm away from your body for 4 weeks following surgery. In addition, do not lift any object even if you are just bending your elbow.
- When lying on your back we recommend you put a towel roll under your elbow to support arm.
- Many patients find that lying on a 30 degree incline wedge in bed is more comfortable than lying flat. Some patients find sleeping in a recliner more comfortable during the first few weeks after surgery.
- Initially after surgery you should not reach behind your back with your operated arm.

May I use my involved arm for dressing, bathing, driving, and other daily activities? How should I manage my arm in the shower?

- You may use your wrist, hand, and elbow for daily activities. This includes dressing, as long as you do not move your operated arm away from your body and it does not increase your pain.
- Do not use your arm to push up/off the bed or chair.
- When using your keyboard and mouse, do not move your arm away from your body.

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- When showering, you may wash under the involved arm pit by bending forward to let the involved arm hang freely and reaching under with the opposite arm

When should I begin formal physical therapy? How often do I need to go?

- Start physical therapy 3-4 days after your surgery. Passive ROM only. You will receive your physical therapy prescription at your pre-op appointment.
- If your PT practice requires a prescription prior to making an appointment we can fax one over with a tentative protocol. Please provide us with the fax number and contact information of the PT practice you have chosen for your therapy.

Are there any medications that I should not take during my recovery/rehabilitation?

- You can take over the counter anti-inflammatories as needed. You can take Tylenol or any of the pain medications your surgeon prescribes. In addition, the use of frequent (3-4 times per day) icing of your shoulder will assist in pain management.

When may I return to recreational activities?

- Return to activities is specific to the particular activity, but generally no sooner than 4-6 months. Always seek permission from your surgeon and therapist prior to starting any sports related activity.

When can I return to work?

- Typically we recommend taking 2 weeks off of work for recovery. At that time we expect you will be off of pain medications and have more of your energy back.
- If you are able to return to work in a sling – you would be able to go to work at that time.
- Keep in mind – you are not able to drive while in the sling.
- If your job requires any lifting, pushing or pulling > 1-2 lbs or does not allow you to work while in a sling you may need to take additional time off of work. If you need a work note please discuss this in advance with Dr. Holovacs or Kendra Margulies (PA).

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Future Dental or Surgical Procedures:

- Now that you have an artificial joint – we recommend prophylactic antibiotics for any future dental or surgical procedures. Please discuss this with your dentist and your primary care provider for further guidelines, recommendations and prophylactic antibiotic prescriptions.

Important phone numbers

- Dr. Holovacs office: (617) 726-0298
- Hospital operator: (617) 726 – 2000
- If the office is closed and you are unable to reach someone in the office – call the hospital line and ask for the orthopaedic resident on call to be paged.

Return to work paperwork, school notes, FMLA, short term disability

Please provide this paperwork as soon as possible to make sure it is done in a timely manner, before your surgery. It often takes 7-10 days for turn-around time to please plan accordingly. Make an effort to fill out as much of the personal information (name, address, date of birth, employer...etc) as possible to make the process easier and faster for the practitioner filling out your paperwork.

Dear Patient,