



Indiana University Health

IU Health Physicians Orthopedics & Sports Medicine

ULNAR COLLATERAL LIGAMENT (UCL) RECONSTRUCTION (TOMMY JOHN SURGERY)

POST OP INSTRUCTIONS

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ABOUT YOUR SURGERY

- With this surgery, we have taken a tendon from the hamstrings of your opposite leg in order to reconstruct the ulnar collateral ligament of your elbow. With time, this will heal and function as your native ligament did to allow for your return to overhead athletic activities.

POST OP OFFICE VISIT

- You should have an office visit scheduled with Dr. Saltzman or his Physician Assistant within 7-10 days after your surgery. If you do not have this appointment please call to ask for Amanda Lubert, LAT, ATC at 317-944-9400 to set up an appointment.

MEDICATIONS

- You will receive prescriptions for pain medication (and other applicable medications) on the day of your surgery if you have not already had it arranged to pick up from the office or sent to your pharmacy ahead of time.
- **The goal of the multimodal pain regimen is to minimize the amount of narcotic**



(opioid) medications that you require for postoperative pain control – if possible, try and take the non-narcotic pain medications instead of the narcotic medication unless you feel you need it.

You should discuss these medications with your primary care doctor to make sure there are no interactions with any other medications that you are taking, and that your kidneys and/or liver are healthy enough for their use.

- Depending on the extent of the surgery you undergo, you will be prescribed either **Hydrocodone-Acetaminophen 10-325 mg (Norco; #20 total)** or **Oxycodone-Acetaminophen 10-325 mg (Percocet; #20 total)** for pain. You may take 1 or 2 tablets every 6 hours as needed. Also depending on the extent of the surgery required, you may additionally be prescribed **Tramadol 50 mg (Ultram; #20 total)** which can be taken either as an augment for pain control, or otherwise as a “step-down” pain medication for mild to moderate pain. These medications work differently for different patients, so you may do better with one versus the other. Dr. Saltzman recommends getting both prescriptions filled and taking one or the other. **DO NOT TAKE BOTH AT THE SAME TIME.** Also, these medicines are **OPTIONAL**, and are not necessary if your pain is tolerable.
- You will also be prescribed **Naproxen 500 mg twice daily (Naprosyn; #28 total)** for pain as needed. This will help through anti-inflammatory pain pathways to further augment overall pain control. This should be your option for pain control if the pain is not so bad as to require the narcotic medication(s).
- You will receive **Gabapentin 100 mg three times daily (Neurontin; #21 total)** which will help through nerve-based pain pathways to further augment overall pain control. It will help as part of the multi-modal pain pathway to reduce overall pain response.
- Once you are off the Norco/Oxycodone/Tramadol and Naproxen, or immediately after surgery, you may start taking Tylenol and Motrin. Unless you have a medical condition that prevents the use of Tylenol or Motrin, you can take 600 mg of Motrin and 650 mg of Tylenol **TOGETHER** or in a staggered fashion every 6 hours as needed. *Do NOT take Norco/Tramadol and Tylenol together (Norco contains tylenol), and do not take Celebrex and Motrin together.*
- You will also receive a prescription for a nausea medicine called **Ondansetron 4 mg ODT (Zofran; #10 total)**. You may take one tablet every 8 hours as needed for nausea.
- You are strongly encouraged to take a stool softener and/or laxative while taking narcotic pain medicine. You will be prescribed **Colace 100 mg (#30 total)**, a stool softener, which can be taken twice daily for constipation as needed.
- Finally, you will receive a prescription for **Prilosec 20 mg (Nexium; #14 total)** which we recommend to take every morning in order to combat the occurrence of heartburn while on the medications above in the postoperative period.
- If you are having pain beyond what is expected from surgery and you need to speak to someone from our office, please do not wait until after 4 PM on weekdays or over the weekend, as we will not be able to address it. Please call 317-944-9400 for further instructions.

ANTICOAGULATION (BLOOD THINNERS)

- You will receive a prescription for **Aspirin 81 mg (#28 total)** to be taken twice daily for prophylaxis against blood clots unless you have a contraindication to receiving this.
- Ambulation, foot/hand pumps, and movement of the surgical site within the confines of the weightbearing and motion restrictions below are additional ways to reduce the occurrence of blood clots after surgery.

DRESSING CHANGES, WOUND CARE, AND BATHING

- Following surgery you will be placed in a splint. This is a rigid dressing that is designed



to keep your elbow from moving after surgery. This splint must be kept clean and dry at all times. To shower, we recommend you cover the splint with a plastic bag and use tape to secure the top so that no water contacts the splint. If it does get wet, please contact our office. You must not remove the splint, it will be removed at your first post op visit.

- When the splint is removed you will also have your sutures removed. Following this you no longer need a dressing on the wound. It is then ok to start showering normally, but do not submerge the wound.
- Please do not apply any lotions, creams, or ointments directly to the incisions until 30 days after surgery.
- ***AVOID STEAM ROOMS, SWIMMING POOLS, AND TUBS FOR A FULL 4 WEEKS AFTER THE DATE OF YOUR SURGERY TO AVOID INFECTION.***

SWELLING / INFLAMMATION CONTROL

- Icing the surgical is very important following surgery. In most cases you will be offered a Polar Care unit to use after surgery. This unit is a cooler which circulates cold water through a cuff. This will be provided to you by IU Health. This device may be left on the surgical site for extended periods of time. There is a rental fee to use this device, or it may be purchased directly. For any questions regarding this equipment please call Indiana University's Post Surgery DME Department at 317-292-3457 (Rob Kalmes).
- If you choose to use regular ice packs, please limit icing to 20 minute sessions every 2-3 hours at most to avoid any skin problems.
- Icing should be continued for the first several weeks following surgery.
- In addition to icing, compression with a support/wrap and elevation of the affected limb above the level of your heart will promote good circulation and reduce both swelling and pain.
- It is normal to have swelling and/or bruising around your incisions, or about the surgical extremity after surgery. This will gradually resolve after surgery.
- **PROLONGED FEVER OVER 102 DEGREES, THICK DRAINAGE, CHEST PAIN, SHORTNESS OF BREATH, OR CALF PAIN SHOULD BE REPORTED IMMEDIATELY. PLEASE CALL/PORTAL MESSAGE THROUGH THE PATIENT PORTAL (DEPENDING ON DAY/TIME) IF YOU EXPERIENCE THESE SYMPTOMS.**

WEIGHTBEARING STATUS / IMMOBILIZATION

- You should not bear any weight with your surgical extremity while it is in the splint, and until you are instructed as part of the postoperative rehabilitation protocol.

REHABILITATION / PHYSICAL THERAPY

- Once the splint has been removed at your first post op visit, a hinged elbow brace will be applied. The purpose of this brace is to allow a safe range of motion while also preventing excessive stiffness.
- Recovery from UCL surgery is slow and deliberate. It is crucial to your success that you follow the recovery protocol very closely even when you feel that you can do more.
- Physical Therapy will be started immediately after your first office visit. This can be done at any facility you like and a prescription for PT will be provided at your time of surgery.
- The therapists will help you through the rehab protocol safely. It is also acceptable to begin working with your school's athletic trainers, although the Physical Therapists should direct the progress and activities.
- Dr. Saltzman will not allow a return to throwing until 4 months post op, and full activity at 6 months post op.

DRIVING AFTER SURGERY



- The ability for someone to resume driving after surgery is seldom a medical question, but more often a legal question. Driving with any form of a brace on may be interpreted as driving while impaired. It is the responsibility of all licensed drivers to drive safely at all times no matter what their permanent or temporary impairment may be.

WORK AFTER SURGERY

- Discussions of return to work will depend on the type of work that you perform, and the immediacy of needs to return. This discussion will be had preoperatively and at each visit postoperatively in order to help you, the patient, to get back to what you need to be doing in a timely fashion, while not compromising your surgical outcome.

DIET AFTER SURGERY

- A balanced, healthy diet high in proteins is most valuable for the body to utilize during the healing process after surgery. There are otherwise no formal restrictions on your diet after surgery.

OTHER COMMENTS

- We recommend to abstain from alcohol or tobacco use in the postoperative period. This is for general health reasons, as combination with the prescribed medications can be dangerous, but also to prevent adversely affecting the body's healing response to your surgery.

*****If you have questions and need to speak to the nurse, please send us a message via the patient portal (instructions on how to create a patient portal will be provided at the time of surgery) ... or if more urgent, please contact us at our triage/call center at 317-944-9400 *****

*****If you have an emergency after hours or on the weekend call the physician on call at 317-944-9400 or call 911*****

*****Someone from Dr. Saltzman's team will call you on your first day after surgery to address any questions or concerns*****