

Thumb Basal Joint Arthritis (CMC Arthroplasty)
(Discharge instructions for Dr. Andrew Federer)

PRESCRIPTIONS: You may have been given a prescription for pain medication today. Hopefully, within the first 4-5 days, your pain will change to where you will need less or no pain medication. Please use your pain medication carefully, as we will probably only renew your medication once if needed. Please take this medication with food if it bothers your stomach. If you are normally able to take nonsteroidal anti-inflammatories (NSAIDs) (e.g. ibuprofen, naproxen, Motrin, Aleve etc.) then it is okay to take this medication in addition to any potential narcotic pain medication you may have been prescribed today. Oftentimes patients who have had previous GI issues (such as GI bleeding) or kidney issues have been recommended to not take nonsteroidal anti-inflammatories by their primary care physicians.

It is illegal in the State of Colorado to drive a car or operate machinery while taking an opioid pain medication, such as the one you may have been prescribed today. Taking this medication in a manner that is different from the prescription instructions can lead to opioid overdose and serious medical complications. After discontinuing the medication, it is not unusual to have symptoms of opioid withdrawal such as irritability, nausea, and/or trouble sleeping.

ICE AND ELEVATION: You may use ice to help to decrease swelling and pain. Elevation, above the level of your heart, as much as possible for the next 48 hours, is critical for decreasing swelling as well as for pain relief. Elevation means higher than your heart. When sitting, your hand should be at least at the level of your head. When walking, the hand needs to be at least at the shoulder level or higher. If you sleep on your back, then we recommend placing two pillows under your elbow and two pillows under your wrist on top of your chest. If the bandage gets too tight, the ace bandage may be loosened.

DRESSING: Please keep the dressing and splint as it is and dry until you come back to see Dr. Federer or the Hand Therapist in clinic. If it is too tight, you may loosen or take off the ace wrap and re-wrap it. Do NOT place any ointments, lotions, or creams on the incision until after your first post-operative visit.

ACTIVITY AND WORK: You are encouraged to move your fingers gently by making a fist and straightening the fingers all the way out, but your thumb will be immobilized. Do this as much as you need to make your fingers move fully and keep the swelling down. Light use of the fingers is allowed, but strong gripping or lifting is often uncomfortable and detrimental to the healing process and should be avoided. For the most part, let discomfort be your guide. You might miss a variable period of time from work and hopefully this issue has been discussed prior to surgery. You may not do any heavy work with your effected hand for some time. Please share this information with your employer and bring any forms that need to be filled out to my medical assistant.

EXPECTATIONS: Hopefully, within the first 4-5 days, your pain will change to where you will need less pain medication. Please use your pain medication carefully, as we very rarely will prescribe any further opiates. The scar will mature over the next 6 months to a year and will become much less visible and tender. If your discomfort or swelling increases, after initially getting better in the first few days, infection may be a concern. Normal time for infection (which is very rare) is between the third and seventh day after surgery. Though the most significant amount of your discomfort will have subsided by 6 weeks post-operatively, it often takes 3 months before you feel that you have near normal function of your hand.

If you are concerned for any reason, please contact us at **(720) 516-9417** and ask for a **Hand Team Medical Assistant**.

FOLLOW-UP APPOINTMENT: This should have been given to you when surgery was scheduled, and will be with Dr. Federer. At this appointment we will take a look at your incision and remove any sutures necessary and set further expectations and/or treatment plan.

Please call **(720) 516-9417** should you have any general questions or need to adjust your post-operative appointment.

For after hour **Emergencies** please call (720) 516-9417 and ask for the Orthopedic Physician on call.