

Care After Hand or Arm Surgery

What can my child eat after surgery?

It is OK for your child to have something light to eat when they are hungry. Examples of foods that are OK are clear liquids, toast, crackers, yogurt, soup, and fruit. If light food stays down, then your child may eat what they usually eat. Some prescription medications can be very constipating. Have your child drink and eat plenty of liquids, fresh fruit and vegetables to help avoid constipation.

How should I take care of my child's surgery site?

To care for your child at home, follow the instructions as marked on this sheet.

Steri-strips over the cut (incision)

- Steri-strips are thin pieces of tape that are on top of dissolvable stitches or used instead of stitches to close the cut (incision).
- Leave the Steri-strips on until they fall off on their own.
- Do not put ointment over the Steri-strips.

Cut incision is closed with skin glue

- Keep the skin clean with soap and water.
- Do not put ointment on the area.
- The glue will flake off on its own after about a week.

Your child has a bandage, dressing, splint or cast

- Keep dry for ____ days. After that it is OK for you to remove outer dressing but leave clear bandage in place.
- Do not remove your child's bandage, splint or cast and keep it clean and dry until the next clinic visit.
- Follow the "Cast Care" guidelines that will be given to you.
- _____

How do I help manage my child's pain?

We partner with you and your child to prevent and relieve pain as completely as possible. You know your child best. No matter the level of your child's pain, believe they are hurting and respond right away. After a surgery your child is likely to have some pain and discomfort. We will work with you to create a plan that, in addition to medicine prescribed for pain, encourages coping activities to treat pain and provide support.

To Learn More

- Orthopedics Clinic
206-987-2109
- Ask your child's healthcare provider
- seattlechildrens.org

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line, 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.

Medicine for pain

If pain medicine was prescribed for your child, use it as directed. You do not need to use all the pain medicine if you think your child no longer needs it.

Follow the instructions marked below for your child:

Check with your healthcare provider first before giving any type of medicine to your child.

- If your child no longer needs medicine prescribed for pain, or if your child did not get a prescription for pain, you can help to manage their pain by giving either over-the-counter acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin).
- It is OK to give your child both acetaminophen (Tylenol) and ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin). Follow the dosage guidelines that will be given to you.
- Do not give your child ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin). Only give acetaminophen (Tylenol) if needed. Follow dosage guidelines that will be given to you.

Try to reduce using narcotics (i.e. oxycodone) after 3 to 5 days.

Swelling

Your child may have swelling around the surgery site and this could also cause their hand and fingers to swell slightly. Unless instructed differently by your doctor, to help reduce pain and swelling it is important to raise your child's hand or area that had surgery. Raise it above the level of their heart. You can use pillows to help do this.

Arm Sling

- Your child will be sent home with a sling. Use the sling until your follow-up appointment.
 - If your child received a nerve block for pain control, we will give you a sling to use. It should be used only during the time the extremity that had surgery is numb. Once your child has full feeling in the extremity, remove the sling and do not use it again.
 - Do not use a sling.
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When can my child get wet?

- Keep the bandages (dressing) completely dry for ___ days. After ___ days, a shower or a quick bath in the tub is OK but your child should avoid a long soak.
 - Do not remove the bandage. Keep completely clean and dry until your child's next clinic appointment.
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When can my child go back to school or childcare?

Most children will stay home the day of surgery and the day after surgery. This gives them time to recover from the procedure and from anesthesia. It is OK for your child to return to school when they are comfortable and when they no longer need strong pain medication.

Some children need to be excused from PE, sports and rough play. Your child:

- May return to full activity
- Should not do PE or sports until next clinic visit. We will give you a letter to excuse your child from PE or sports if needed.

How active can my child be?

For the first 12 hours at home after surgery, your child should do only quiet activities, with adult supervision. After this period, it is OK for your child to be more active. Your child will limit their own activity if they feel uncomfortable.

Your child's activity level will depend on the type of surgery they had.

Follow the instructions checked below:

- Exercise all fingers of your child's operated hand each day. Have them make a full fist (called "full flexion") and full extension to make fingers straight and then fan fingers in and out. Do these exercises 4 to 5 times a day while awake until their bandage is removed.
- It is very important that your child not move their hand and fingers after their surgery. Their bandage, splint or cast will help the area stay immobile.
- No weight bearing until clinic visit.
- Your child may return to full weight bearing as tolerated.

If your child drives a car, they should not drive while they are taking strong medicines prescribed for pain or if they are in a splint or cast.

When should I call my child's healthcare team

Please call if your child has any of these warning signs:

- Fever 101.6 or higher
- Pain increasing in intensity despite giving pain medications according to direction and on time
- Finger tips that are blue or white instead of the normal pink
- Redness on the skin spreading up the arm
- New bleeding
- Vomits more than twice and unable to keep liquids down

During weekday business hours, call the Orthopedics Clinic at 206-987-2109. On evenings and weekends, call the operator at Seattle Children's at 206-987-2000. Ask the operator to page the orthopedic resident on call.

When will my child be seen again?

Your child's follow-up appointment is on _____

Please call the Orthopedic Clinic to confirm your appointment time.

Your child will be seen at the following location:

- Seattle Children's Main Campus
4800 Sand Point Way NE, Seattle, WA 98105
Level 6, Ocean zone entrance
 - Bellevue Clinic
1500 116th Ave NE, Bellevue, WA 98104
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