



David B. Cohen, M.D. / Sports Medicine, Knee, Shoulder and Elbow Surgery / 203-407-3518

## **AC Joint Ligament Reconstruction**

### **Prior to Surgery:**

We require pre-admission testing by your family physician within 30 days prior to surgery. We **MUST** have the results in our office at least 10 business days before surgery. Fax number 203-407-3558, attention Regina.

On the day prior to surgery, you must call the surgical center at 407-1500 to find out the arrival time for your surgery. This is usually two hours prior to surgery, in order to admit you, shave your shoulder before surgery, etc.

**\*\*Please do not shave yourself, as this may increase bacterial growth on your skin.\*\***

PLEASE MAKE ARRANGEMENTS FOR HELP AT HOME IF YOU LIVE ALONE. YOU WILL NEED SOMEONE TO STAY WITH YOU THE FIRST NIGHT, BUT YOU WILL STILL NEED HELP FOR SEVERAL DAYS AFTERWARD.

### **Day of Surgery:**

It is a good idea to wear a loose, button-down shirt to the surgical center. Your family may wait with you until you are taken to the holding area. Dr. Cohen will see you prior to the procedure, answer any questions, and place my initials on the correct shoulder.

You will be in the recovery room for about 45 minutes after your surgery.

### **After Surgery:**

In the operating room, your shoulder will be lightly bandaged and a sling with a pillow will be applied. Your I.V. will be taken out in the recovery room after you have successfully emptied your bladder.

We may want you to begin physical therapy after your first post-op visit with Dr. Cohen. P.T. usually begins between 3 and 6 weeks after surgery and will be determined by Dr. Cohen on a case to case basis. We work closely with Star PT, but if no office is convenient, check with your insurance provider for other facilities that are covered. You will be going to physical therapy 3 times per week for 4-5 months after your surgery.



It is important for you to ALSO be doing your exercises ON YOUR OWN to help regain the range of motion of your shoulder. You should begin range of motion exercises for the elbow immediately after surgery.

Pain medication will be given to you in the recovery room. It will be the same medication that you home with.

My assistant Regina will make your post-operative appointment for you (usually at your pre-op appointment). If you are unsure about this, please call the day after surgery.

### **At Home:**

Change the dressing two days after your surgery. The incision site will be covered with steri-strips. **DO NOT REMOVE THE STERI-STRIPS.** Please do not use any ointments or creams on the incision or portal sites. When showering, you may cover the incision with plastic wrap and tape or large water-proof band-aids that do not stick to the steri-strips until you are seen in our office for your post-operative check.

IT IS NORMAL FOR YOUR HAND TO BE NUMB FROM THE NERVE BLOCK FOR THE FIRST 24 HOURS. AFTER THAT, NORMAL FEELING SHOULD RETURN; THERE MAY BE SOME NUMBNESS OR TINGLING FOR 2-3 DAYS BUT SHOULD BE GRADUALLY IMPROVING.

You will be using your sling with the waist-strap for 6 weeks after surgery. You may remove it to perform exercises. Try to do your exercises 1-2 times a day.

Exercises: You should bend and straighten your elbow 10 times, 3 times a day. You may squeeze a ball and move your wrist.

Do not use the hand on your operated side to open any jars or grip anything against resistance. Your shoulder is responsible for stabilizing your hand! Typing is permissible as long as you rotate at the body instead of at the shoulder. Also, do not push off with the elbow of the operated arm when getting out of a chair or bed.

You may be contacted by a company that provides an ice machine. Patients find this extremely helpful for pain control. Try to use the ice machine, ice or ice packs as much as possible, especially during the first 2 weeks after surgery and after PT. If the icepack is on your skin, use it for 30 minutes on, 30 minutes off. You may be more comfortable sleeping in a recliner or with pillows propping you up in your bed.



Do not attempt to lift the arm on your own or to push off with your elbow for the first 6 weeks while the tendon is healing to the bone. After 6 weeks, you may begin to lift your arm on your own, but do not lift anything other than the arm itself. At 3 months after surgery, we will allow you to lift up to 5 pounds. At 6-8 months after surgery, you may begin to lift heavier objects. Your therapist will instruct you in proper lifting techniques to minimize the stress on the rotator cuff in the future.

**Miscellaneous Information:**

There may be a small amount of bleeding and/or fluid leaking at the site. This is normal as the shoulder is filled with fluid during the surgery, sometimes causing leakage for 24-36 hours. You may need to change or reinforce the bandage as needed.

It is normal to have mildly increased swelling in the arm and hand and some bruising on days 1-3 compared to the day of the surgery. The swelling should be decreased by using the ice and elevating your hand.

Please feel free to call our office with any questions or concerns. Best wishes for a speedy recovery.