



When can I return to full activity?

- You may be able to return to work as early as 5-7 days after surgery, based on the physical requirements of your job.
- If you participate in sports or strenuous physical exercise, you should anticipate 6 or more months before being released to “full duty.”
- Most people who have this surgery feel “fully recovered” after 9-12 months.



When do I start physical therapy?

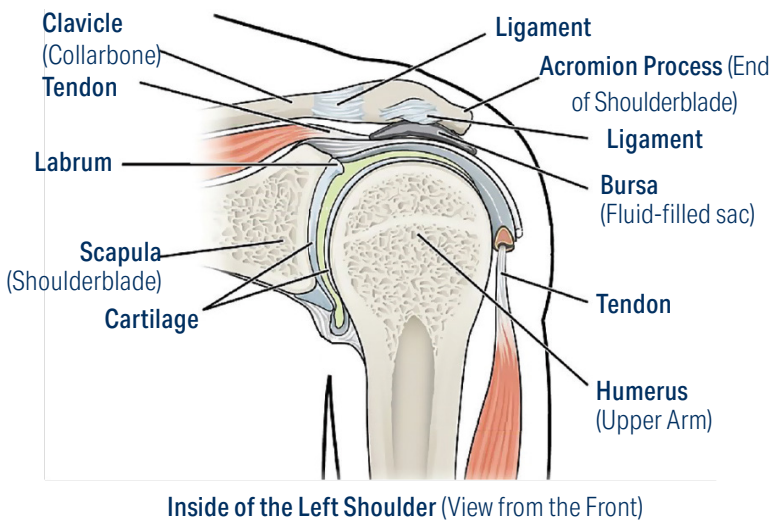
- You should begin physical therapy approximately 2-6 weeks after surgery (unless otherwise advised by your surgeon). This is key to your recovery!

When do I need to follow-up after surgery?

- **Schedule a follow-up appointment with your surgeon for 10-14 days after surgery.**
- If you have any questions or concerns during that time, call Fremont Orthopaedics at (307) 332-9720 EXT. 1005
- For medical emergencies, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department.



Shoulder Arthroscopy Postoperative Instructions



You received general anesthesia during surgery, during which you were constantly monitored by an anesthesiologist or anesthetist. This type of anesthesia involves both sedation and pain management for the duration of your surgery.

What should I eat and drink after surgery?

- You may eat and drink what you feel like after your surgery, but it is very important to stay hydrated, so you should consciously increase your water intake.
- Some patients experience nausea after surgery, so we recommend that you start with light foods such as soup, toast, crackers, water, or juice. If you are tolerating these foods, you may progress to a regular diet.
- Opioid pain medications often cause constipation, so eating a high fiber diet may help you to avoid this side effect.

Information about your surgery

Your surgery was performed using an arthroscope, which is a fiber optic camera that is put into your shoulder through small incisions. The camera is attached to a large viewing screen. This allows your surgeon to examine the internal structures of your shoulder and to repair damaged tissues using small instruments that are inserted through the same small incisions as the arthroscope.

How do I take care of my dressing?

- The dressing placed on your shoulder in the operating room consists of gauze pads and clear plastic adhesive called Tegaderm. This dressing absorbs drainage from the small incisions on your shoulder.
- This dressing should remain on your shoulder, undisturbed, for the first 72 hours after surgery. You can change the dressing sooner than 72 hours after surgery if it becomes fully saturated with drainage.
- Normal drainage after surgery is blood-tinged, clear pink, or reddish.

WHEN TO SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL ATTENTION:



- If the patient becomes unresponsive, is extremely difficult to awaken, or has difficulty breathing
- If dark red blood fully saturates the dressing after surgery
- If drainage from the surgical incisions is creamy, yellow/green, or has a foul odor
- If you develop numbness or signs of poor circulation (blue/grey color or icy cold temperature) in your operative limb and these symptoms are not better after loosening your brace/dressing and changing positions
- If you experience severe nausea and vomiting and are unable to keep fluids down, fail to urinate for more than 8 hours, or experience dizziness or fainting
- If you develop a fever greater than 101.5°F
- If you develop severe tenderness or swelling in the middle of your calf
- If your pain cannot be controlled with the maximum amount of pain medication prescribed to you

SUMMARY OF KEY ITEMS FOR YOUR RECOVERY:



- Perform exercises 3 times per day, starting the day after surgery.
- Apply cold therapy to your operative site 5-6 times per day.
- Change your dressing every day, starting 72 hours after surgery
- Begin physical therapy two to six weeks after surgery.
- Use your sling as directed and follow activity guidelines, as outlined above.

Dressing Change Instructions

- **After 72 hours**, you may remove the dressing from your shoulder. Do not remove your stitches or the small paper strips on your incisions.
- Place clean gauze over each incision, and cover the gauze with a new piece of clear plastic adhesive, so that it is completely covered. *You can purchase clear plastic Tegaderm dressings at *Palace Pharmacy in Lander or Walgreens Pharmacy in Riverton*.
- After your first dressing change, additional dressing changes may be done “as needed” when your dressing becomes wet or after bathing. Once there is little to no drainage on the gauze when you change your dressings, you may place Band-Aids and clear plastic adhesive over your incisions instead of gauze.
- You should keep clean, dry dressings on your shoulder until your first appointment after surgery, and should only remove your dressing for bathing.

Bathing After Surgery

- You may shower at the time of your first dressing change. Do not swim or submerge your operative site in a bathtub, hot tub, or hot spring until cleared by your surgeon.
- To wash your operative site, simply allow soapy water to run over the incisions. You may gently wash around your incisions, but do not vigorously scrub your incision sites.
- After washing, gently pat to dry your incisions with a clean towel. Once dry, you may apply clean, dry dressings (as described above).

What activities and exercises can I do?

- Minimize activity for the first couple of days after your surgery. You will likely need assistance from an adult caregiver for the majority of the first week after surgery.
- **Do not reach overhead, lift or carry items with your operative arm** for the entire time that you are required to wear a sling. Your surgeon will inform you when you may begin doing these activities, likely 6-8 weeks after surgery.
- When resting on the bed or couch, you will likely find it most comfortable to support your operative arm with a pillow.
- Apply cold therapy to your shoulder for 30-40 minutes 5-6 times a day for the first three days after surgery. You should keep applying ice 3 times a day for 2 more weeks.
- Never apply ice directly to bare skin. Do not use heat on your shoulder for the first several weeks after surgery.
- You will begin a comprehensive physical therapy program, in addition to home exercises, as directed by your surgeon.

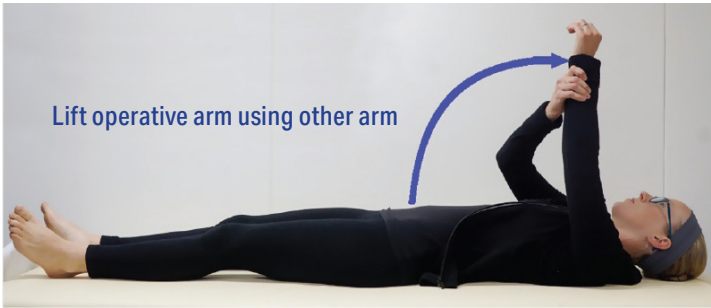


Exercise Instructions

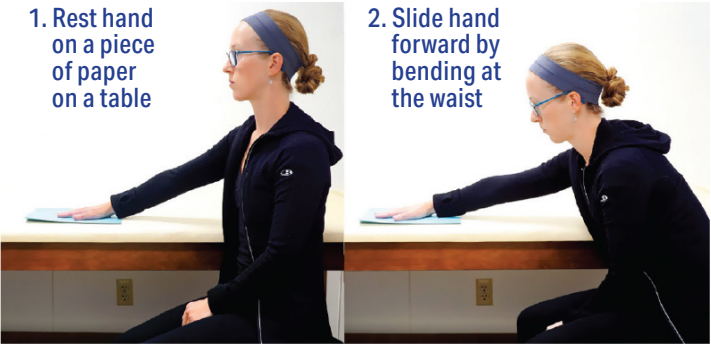
It is very important for you to begin doing the indicated exercises the day after surgery, and to perform the exercises 3 times a day to maintain strength and mobility.

☒ Your surgeon will check the boxes that apply to you.

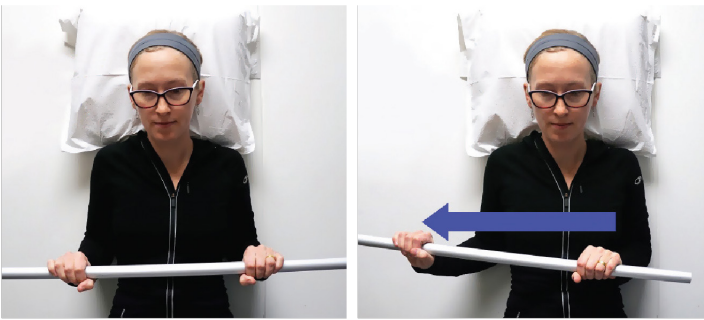
- ☐ **Active exercises:** These exercises use the muscles of your operative arm.
 - ☐ **Hand and wrist movement:** With your arm in your sling or at your side, move your wrist in circles (both clockwise and counterclockwise) for two minutes. Make a fist and then spread your fingers wide for two minutes. Do not move your shoulder while you do this exercise.
 - ☐ **Elbow movement:** With your arm at your side, straighten and bend your elbow 15-20 times. Do not move your shoulder while you do this exercise.
- ☐ **Passive exercises:** These exercises are performed without using the muscles in your operative arm/shoulder. Instead, you use your other arm (or the help of another adult) to move your operative arm.



- ☐ **Supine forward elevation:** Lie on your back and lift your operative arm straight up using your other arm. Repeat this 15-20 times.



- ☐ **Table Slides:** Rest the hand of your operative arm on the top of a table and place a piece of paper under your hand. Bend forward at the waist to slide your hand (and the piece of paper) forward. Repeat this 5 times.



- 1. With elbows on bed, hold pole in bothhands
- 2. Rotate operative arm outward using other arm

- ☐ **External rotation:** Lie on your back with the elbow of your operative arm bent to 90 degrees. Hold a cane, yardstick, or similar object in your other hand and use it to rotate your operative shoulder outward. Repeat this15-20 times.

How do I use my sling?

- You will wake up after surgery with your operative arm in a sling. The purpose of the sling is to support the weight of your arm while the repaired structures in your shoulder are healing. Your elbow should be slid all the way back in the sling pocket. You may adjust the sling position for comfort, as long as your arm is supported and the bend in your elbow is maintained.

Sling Use

- Depending on which structures within your shoulder were repaired, you will be able to do one of the following.
- ☒ Your surgeon will check the boxes that apply to you.
- ☐ **Wear your sling for 6 weeks after surgery**, only removing it while doing your exercises or showering. You will need to wear your sling during the day and while sleeping in order to allow your tissues to heal.
- ☐ **Wear your sling for 3-7 days after surgery**, only removing it while doing your exercises or showering. If you are comfortable, you may take the sling off. Do not lift or carry anything that weighs more than one pound with your operative arm until directed to do so by your surgeon.

What medications can I take?

- **For safety reasons, always take prescription medications as directed** and talk with your surgeon if you think your prescription needs adjustment.
- **You will likely need to take pain medication on a regular schedule for the first 1-3 days after surgery.** After that time, you can begin to decrease your pain medication by taking smaller doses and increasing the time between doses.
- You may use Tylenol (acetaminophen) instead of your prescription pain medication.

How to Manage Pain After Surgery

- You will experience some pain following surgery, which is part of the expected healing process. Our goal is to help you maintain a mild level of pain that allows you to go about your daily activities, participate in rehabilitation exercises, and sleep at night.
- For the first several days after surgery, it is helpful to take pain medication at regular intervals to keep pain at a tolerable level. This is more effective than allowing pain to become severe and trying to “chase it” back down to a tolerable level.
- **It is extremely important for you to ice your operative site in order to reduce pain, swelling, and inflammation.**



Precautions with Pain Medications

- **Pain medication should always be taken with food** to avoid an upset stomach. You may split pills in half to take a smaller dose if needed.
- **Nausea and itching may occur with opioid pain medications.** If you experience these side effects, you may want to decrease your dose of pain medication or stop taking it.
- **Constipation is a common side effect of opioid pain medications.** To avoid constipation, increase your fluid and fiber intake, and consider using an over-the-counter stool softener (such as Colace or Docusate).
- **Do not take more than a total of 3 grams (3000 mg) of Tylenol in 24 hours.** Exceeding this limit can be toxic to your liver and is very dangerous. Many pain medications also contain Tylenol (acetaminophen), and it is important that you do not take a combined total of more than 3000 mg of this medication per day.
- **Sedation is a side effect of all opioids.** Patients who become very sleepy while using pain medication should not take another dose until they become alert.
- **Do not drive or drink alcohol while taking opioid pain medications.** You should also avoid tasks that require judgment, coordination, or short-term memory (such as childcare, operating heavy machinery, making legal/financial decisions, etc.).