



## **Total Elbow Replacement Post-Operative Instructions**

The following is an outline of instructions and information for post-operative total elbow replacement. These instructions are a guide. If your particular procedure and instructions differ, you will appropriately be informed by Dr Chien.

### **Pain and Swelling:**

It is normal to have pain and swelling in your elbow after surgery. The swelling may last 2-3 weeks and the pain is variable. Acute pain, however, is usually relieved after the first 3-7 days after surgery. It is normal to see some bruising. Take your oral pain medication as directed for pain. If you have severe pain and swelling, or redness that persists, you should contact our office or your family doctor. Swelling can be minimised by doing the following:

- 1) Make certain your bandage is not too tight. If it is, you may loosen it.
- 2) Ice packs may be used to help with the pain and swelling in your elbow. You should place a towel between the skin and the ice pack to avoid freezing the skin. You may use ice packs as frequently as necessary. This is generally continued for the first 1-weeks after surgery.
- 3) Elevate your arm in a sling (if you are lying down, prop your arm up on several pillows).

### **Warnings:**

Notify Dr. Chien immediately or present to the Emergency Dept if any of the following occur:

- **Excessive bleeding**
- **Excessive non-bloody wound drainage beyond the first 3-4 days**
- **Poor pain control**
- **Numbness or tingling of the fingers not related to bruising**
- **Fever  $>37.5^{\circ}\text{C}$  after postoperative day 3**
- **Increased redness along incision**

### **Follow Up with Dr. Chien:**

Usually, your post-operative appointment would have been booked for you prior to surgery. If you do not have an appointment please call to arrange one. If at any time after your surgery you feel you would like to come in earlier for your post-operative appointment, please call the office and arrange a time.



## **REHABILITATION:**

### **Post-operative Day 1-7**

- Non weight bearing on operated extremity
- No excessive stretching
- Avoid excessive varus/valgus stress to the elbow (i.e. avoid excessive reaching across the body)
- Keep dressings clean and dry

#### Exercises:

- Out of sling/elbow splint as tolerated
- Active ROM neck, shoulder, wrist, and hand
- Gentle Active-Assisted ROM elbow extension and flexion exercises initiated with elbow held close to the body (adducted position) with forearm in neutral to pronation (avoid varus/valgus stress)
- Gentle Active-Assisted ROM supination and pronation exercises initiated with elbow held close to the body
- Gentle gravity-assisted elbow extension stretching
- Frequent ice packs for pain, swelling, and inflammation management
- Compressive wrapping/garments for swelling management if indicated

### **Post-operative Week 2-6**

Wound review and suture removal at around 2 weeks

- Sling off
- Continue above precautions and exercises

Follow up with Dr Chien at around 6 weeks with a new Xray

### **Post-operative Week 6-12**

- No repetitive motions of more than 1kg and no single lifts of more than 5kg with operated upper extremity
- Continue above previous exercises as indicated
- No specific strengthening exercises as this will cause early failure
- Aim for range of motion of at least 20-120 degrees by week 12

### **Post-operative >3 Months**

- Maintain pain free functional elbow arc of motion
- Continue exercises on a home program 2-3 times a week
- Lifetime weight bearing limit of 5kg
- No swinging sports nor throwing activities for life