

DEPARTMENT OF PLASTIC SURGERY - DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS FOR HAND SURGERY

The following instructions will help you in the postoperative care of your hand or upper extremity.

- Make yourself comfortable. Rest and relax the first day. You will need to use your other hand and arm more. Do not drive or operate any equipment on the day of your surgery. The effects of anesthesia and/or medication are still present and drowsiness may occur. Limit activity; no strenuous exercise or play without your physician's approval.
- It is extremely important to **KEEP THE OPERATED HAND ABOVE THE LEVEL OF THE HEART** at all times. The elevation will reduce the amount of swelling which will improve significantly any pain that you might experience. The upper extremity could be elevated on two or three pillows at your side. The elevation of the hand should be also continued at night. Use the sling to hold your arm up when you are not supporting it with pillows. In order to prevent stiffness of the elbows and the shoulders, please elevate the hand above the level of the head with complete extension of the elbow and the shoulder for four or five times every hour.
- Check your fingers - Feel your fingertips every 4-6 hours the first couple days. Check for warmth, and look at their color. After the first couple of days, look at your fingers twice a day. If you have increased swelling, numbness, tingling, a color or temperature change, Contact us/come to the emergency dept immediately.
- Unless you are instructed otherwise, Kindly do the exercise of the fingers of the operated hand as instructed by the Plastic Surgeon. These exercises will prevent any stiffness of the fingers, and it will also prevent any swelling of the fingers or the hand; that will significantly improve any degree of pain.
- If you had a tendon repair, then follow the instructions given to you regarding movements of the fingers. Usually with tendon repairs we don't allow active movements of the fingers for three to five weeks depending on the location and the degree of the tendon injury.
- You may bath first day after surgery, keeping your hand dressing clean and dry. Do not lift anything for 2-3 weeks as instructed. Take deep breathing - Clear your lungs by taking a deep breath, holding it for 10 seconds, and letting the air out slowly. Repeat this 5-6 times, 4 times a day - in the morning, at noon, in the afternoon, and before bedtime. Eat a light meal the first night you are home. Then, you may resume your normal eating habits. Drink two glasses of fluid your first evening home. After the first couple of days resume your usual routines slowly. Ask your doctor about returning to work.
- If you have a splint or a cast, please try to avoid pressing the splint or the cast against any hard surface or a sharp edge, because this may create an indentation in the cast or the splint which will form a sore in the skin underlying the splint. **THE SPLINT AND THE CAST SHOULD BE KEPT DRY.** Cover the dressing or cast with a plastic bag when you shower. If your splint is too tight, too loose, broken, or wet report to OPD. You may have a rubber drain in your operated hand. This drain will be removed in the OPD on the next visit/as decided by your Doctor.
- Please **DO NOT CHANGE THE DRESSING** unless you are given other instructions. The dressing will be changed when you come to the OPD for the next postoperative visit.
- You may be prescribed a strong pain medication or antibiotics. Please follow the label directions for taking the medications. You should not drive or operate any machinery while you are taking the pain medication. If any reactions from medication occur, please stop medication and contact Emergency as soon as possible. Avoid drinking any alcohol.
- If you should have any **SEVERE PAIN** that the pain medication does not help, **SWELLING, BLUISH DISCOLORATION** of the fingers or fingernails, **NUMBNESS** of the fingertips, or **ELEVATED TEMPERATURE** greater than 100.5 F or 38.1° C for 2 readings taken 4 hours apart, excessive bleeding or drainage on the dressing, any signs of infection at the incisions (redness, hot to touch, or tenderness). please inform us immediately / come to the Emergency Room **IMMEDIATELY**.
- **Sick leave:** Don't forget to take sick leave before you leave, if you need it. Back dated sick leaves can't be given.
- **If you have any problems or questions**, please feel free to call Plastic Surgeon/Plastic Surgery Nurse. If they are not available, please call or come to the Emergency Dept of NMC Specialty Hospital, Dubai.
- **Follow up :** It is important to keep your appointments. Kindly contact appointment desk on 04-2679999 for a post operative follow-up appointment.