



Department of Physical Therapy

Total Shoulder Replacement: Home Instructions

Sling: Wear the sling you were provided after surgery both during the day and at night. The sling helps protect your shoulder while it is healing. You may remove your sling to perform your home exercise program and when dressing and bathing. When you remove your sling, support your affected arm (your affected arm is the one you had surgery on) with your other hand.

Home Exercise Program: Perform your hand, wrist and elbow exercises (as instructed by your physical therapist) 3-4 times a day. These exercises help improve circulation in your arm, prevent blood clots, and maintain mobility of the joints in your hand, wrist and elbow while your shoulder is healing.

Dressing: Ask your Care Partner to help you get dressed. When putting on a buttoned shirt, T-shirt, jacket or sweater, support your affected arm with your other hand and thread it into the sleeve first.

Showering: Ask your Care Partner to help you shower. Use your "shower sling" (canvas sling provided by your physical therapist) to support your arm when taking a shower.

Remember to wash under your arm. To wash under your arm when using your shower sling, lean slightly forward at the waist. Let your arm move gently away from your body. Wash and rinse under your arm.

Once you are finished showering, dry off, remove the shower sling, dress and put on your normal sling.

Resting and Sleeping: Wear your sling while resting (sitting on the couch, in a chair or in a recliner) and sleeping. Place a small pillow or rolled towel behind your elbow to prevent your elbow from sliding backward. **You always should be able to see your elbow when wearing your sling.**

Ice Therapy: You received a cold therapy unit when you left the hospital. This cold therapy unit circulates cold water through a cold pad that you place on your shoulder with Velcro straps. You must place a towel between your skin and the cold pad when using this cold therapy unit to protect your skin from injury. Use this cold therapy unit 3-4 times a day for 20-30 minutes each session to help control pain and swelling.

TENS Unit: You may have received a TENS unit when you left the hospital. If so, use it for 1 hour on/1 hour off intervals as needed to help control pain. Do NOT use your TENS unit while sleeping.

Activities to Avoid:

- Do not actively raise your arm.
- Do not place your hand behind your back. (Examples are reaching for wallet in back pocket, putting belt through back loops, attaching bra and toileting.)
- Do not bear weight on your arm.
- Do not lift objects with your arm.
- Do not stretch or make sudden movements (moving arm/hand away from body).
- Do not drive until cleared to do so by your doctor.

If you have any questions about these instructions, please call the Physical Therapy department at **(864) 797-1201**.