



# Open Reduction and Internal Fixation Distal Radius with Bridge Plate

## Patient Postoperative Instructions

Laith Al-Shihabi, MD

### 0-2 weeks

#### Pain medication:

- Use your prescription pain medication as needed to control pain.
- If your arm was numbed (blocked) for the surgery by the anesthesiologist, begin taking pain medication before the block wears off.
- Do not drive or operate machinery while taking narcotic/opioid pain medication.
- Unless you cannot take them for other medical reasons, it is ok to use over-the-counter anti-inflammatory medication (e.g. Advil or Aleve) in addition to your prescription pain medication. Do not take tylenol as your prescription already contains this medication.

#### Post-op Dressings:

- Keep the dressings and splint in place until your first postoperative visit.
- Elevation of the hand, along with ice on-and-off for 20 minutes at a time, will help with swelling and pain.
- It is ok to shower, but the dressings must stay clean and dry. Place a waterproof covering over the dressings while bathing or showering (such as a heavy plastic bag that is sealed with Saran wrap).
- If the dressings get dirty, wet, or come apart please contact the office to have the dressing re-done.

#### Motion:

- Start moving your fingers and thumb that are not in the splint as soon as possible.
- Gently work on moving your palm up (supination) and palm down (pronation), along with flexing and extending your elbow.
- You can use your hand for light activity, such as eating, drinking, or using a computer.
- Do not lift, carry, push, or pull anything heavier than a glass of water or can of soda.

### 2-6 weeks (First post-op visit)

#### Splint:

- The postoperative splint and sutures will be removed at your 2-week visit.
- You will be placed in to a cast at the first post-op visit.
- Keep the cast clean and dry at all times.

#### Motion:

- Therapy will be started for finger, forearm, and elbow active and passive range of motion exercises in the cast.
- No wrist motion at this time.
- Continue to avoid lifting, carrying, pushing, or pulling anything heavier than a glass of water.
- Transition to a home exercise program at 6 weeks

## **6 -10 weeks (Second post-op visit)**

### Splint:

- If a cast was used, you will be switched to a removable wrist splint.
- Wear the splint full-time.
- If you have not done so, you can begin scar massage at this time.

### Motion:

- Continue finger, forearm, and elbow range of motion at home.
- Begin gentle finger and forearm strengthening.
- When wearing the brace, you can lift/carry up to 5lbs (about 1/2 gallon of milk) as your symptoms allow at 8 weeks.

## **10-12 weeks (Third post-op visit)**

Schedule your second surgery for removal of the bridge plate around the 11-12 week mark after surgery

### Splint:

- Continue use of the splint full-time.

### Motion:

- Continue your home exercise program

## **14-20 weeks (First post-op visit after removal of the plate)**

### Splint:

- The postoperative splint and sutures will be removed at your 2-week visit.
- Use the removable wrist splint on an as-needed basis over the next 4 weeks.
- The goal is to stop using the brace by 4-6 weeks after plate removal

### Motion:

- Therapy will be re-started for finger and wrist active and passive range of motion exercises in the cast.
- You can lift up to 5 lbs at 2 weeks after plate removal, 10-15lbs at 4 weeks, and have no lifting/carrying restrictions 6 weeks after plate removal
- Transition to a home exercise program at 6 weeks

## **20+ weeks (Second post-op visit after removal of the plate)**

The splint should no longer be necessary at this point. If needed, therapy can be continued to focus on further strengthening or work conditioning. There are no lifting/carrying or other activity restrictions, unless otherwise discussed on a case-by-case basis.