

Outpatient Shoulder Replacement Post-Operative Instructions

What is outpatient surgery?

- Historically, all patients having surgery would enter the hospital the day before surgery and would stay for days and sometimes weeks after surgery. As surgical and anesthetic technique has improved, long hospital stays are no longer necessary to perform surgery safely. As a result, most surgery in the United States is now performed as “outpatient surgery” or “day surgery”, meaning that the patient comes to the surgical center and leaves the surgical center the day of surgery

What are the benefits of outpatient surgery?

- Benefits of outpatient surgery include recovering in the comfort of your own home, sleeping in your own bed, not being awoken throughout the night by noises and hospital staff, not having to eat hospital food, and not being exposed to antibiotic resistant infections.

What are the downsides of outpatient surgery?

- Downsides include not having access to intravenous strong pain medications, not having immediate access to life-saving resources, and not having help with day to day activities.

Is it safe to have a shoulder replacement and leave the hospital the same day?

- Numerous studies have demonstrated that outpatient shoulder replacement is safe in most patients. In patients with underlying medical conditions staying in the hospital may be safer.

What if I have a far drive after surgery?

- If you have to drive more than 2-3 hours after surgery or have to fly home, you may consider staying in a hotel to avoid traveling the evening of surgery.

What about pain after surgery?

- Most patients have very little pain in the first 24 hours after surgery. This is because the anesthesiology team will perform a long-acting nerve block. In addition to the nerve block, Dr. Chalmers recommends Tylenol, an anti-inflammatory, and icing the shoulder. In combination, many patients find that these are all that are required for pain. Dr. Chalmers will provide a prescription for a narcotic pain medication in addition, but recommends that this be minimized as these medications are dangerous and have many side effects. Pain after surgery is a normal and temporary part of the shoulder healing and is rarely a sign that something has gone wrong.

What do I need to be worried about having an outpatient shoulder replacement?

- Symptoms that should prompt you to contact us include difficulty or inability to pee, not having a bowel movement for 4-5 days, difficulty breathing or feeling short of breath, a racing heart rate, excessive wound drainage or drainage for longer than five days after surgery, redness surrounding the incision, calf pain, or numbness or tingling in the arm or hand that was not present before surgery and has lasted more than 24 hours.

What if I need help after surgery?

- If you need help or have a question or a concern, Dr. Chalmers and his team always want to know about it. You can contact our team directly at (801) 587-0063 via phone during regular business hours. If you have an after-hours question, you can contact the orthopaedic resident on call at (801) 581-2121. You can also contact us at chalmerspractice@hsc.utah.edu, although this inbox is only monitored during regular business hours.