

Instructions for Wearing a Sling

Sling Use

- After shoulder surgery, Dr. Chalmers will sometimes recommend a sling as a reminder not to use the arm while the shoulder heals. You will receive instructions as to the length of time the sling is recommended after surgery. However, even beyond this period, you may prefer to continue to use the sling in unpredictable situations and in crowds, to alert others that you recently had shoulder surgery.
- In most cases, the sling is not to immobilize the shoulder, but instead to remind you not to use the arm. Thus, if you are sitting quietly, such as while watching television, working on a computer, texting on your phone, or eating at a restaurant, you can remove the sling.
- If you fall asleep and wake up in the same position, you can sleep without your sling. If you are a more active sleeper, you may consider sleeping in the sling to provide an active tactile reminder to the body that the shoulder has had surgery and is still healing.
- The sling comes with two parts: a sleeve for the arm with a strap that goes around the neck, and a pillow with a strap that goes around the body. With rare exceptions, the pillow is not needed for the shoulder to heal, but is provided for your comfort. Try the sling both with and without the pillow between the body and the arm. Some patients are more comfortable with the pillow and some without and either way is acceptable for healing.
- To remove the sling: unfasten the neck strap and slide the arm out while allowing the elbow to straighten. Reverse the process to replace. If the sling is correctly positioned, the arm is parallel to the floor and the hand is at the belly button.
- **You cannot drive wearing a sling.** We do not recommend driving while wearing a sling. Insurance companies may NOT cover an accident if the police report states that the driver was wearing a sling.
- Remove the sling 3 times a day for 15-20 minutes at a time. During this time, maximally straighten and bend your elbow. Maximally straighten and bend your wrist. Make a tight fist and then maximally straighten your fingers. Repeat each of these exercises for 10 repetitions. These exercises are very important to retain mobility in your elbow, wrist, and hand.
- Dr. Chalmers recommends that patients in a sling continue to be active. Walking on a treadmill at an incline or riding a stationary bike are both good ways to exercise while wearing a sling. Exercise helps the shoulder to heal by increasing blood flow to the surgical area. It can also improve sleep.
- Wearing a long-sleeved shirt as a “liner” between the sling and the skin can help to keep it clean.

Contact Info

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