

# Post-Operative Instructions: Shoulder Surgery

Surgeon: Dr. David Gazzaniga, MD

Surgery Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Procedure: \_\_\_\_\_

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## 1. Sling Use

- A sling **with or without a bolster** will be placed after surgery, especially for **rotator cuff repairs**.
  - For **most repairs and reconstructions**, the sling must remain in place for **6 weeks**.
  - Only remove the sling for hygiene and specific exercises if instructed.
  - **Do not drive** while wearing the sling. Driving is only permitted **after the sling is discontinued** and you have **regained safe, functional use** of your arm.
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## 2. Dressing & Wound Care

- Leave the surgical dressing **clean, dry, and in place for 5 days** after surgery.
  - On day 5, you may remove the outer dressing. Leave the **steri-strips** (small white tapes over the incisions) in place.
  - Do **not soak** the incision (no baths, pools, or hot tubs) until cleared by Dr. Gazzaniga.
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## 3. Motion Restrictions

- For **most shoulder surgeries**, including rotator cuff, labrum, and fracture repairs:
  - **Avoid all active motion** of the shoulder unless specifically instructed otherwise.
- You may be allowed to move your elbow, wrist, and hand while keeping the shoulder still.

#### 4. Physical Therapy

- **Rotator Cuff Repairs:** Physical therapy to begin **after 6 weeks**. No shoulder movement before then unless directed.
  - **Labrum and Fracture Repairs:** Physical therapy typically begins **after your first follow-up visit**, depending on healing and surgical findings.
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#### 5. Sleeping & Positioning

- Sleep and rest will be uncomfortable for several weeks.
  - Plan to sleep in a **reclined position** with pillows or in an **easy chair**.
  - This may continue for **up to 6 weeks**, and proper positioning is important to protect your repair.
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#### 6. Pain Management

- Use **ice regularly** to reduce pain and inflammation—apply for **20 minutes at a time** throughout the day.
  - You may be prescribed pain medications. Use them as directed, and taper off as your pain improves.
  - Over-the-counter medications like acetaminophen or ibuprofen may also be used if permitted.
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#### 7. Special Note on Biceps Procedures

- If your surgery involved the **biceps tendon**, be aware that changes in biceps appearance (a "Popeye" bulge) may occur. This is usually cosmetic and not painful, but should be reported if noticed.

## 8. Importance of Compliance

- **Following post-operative instructions is critical.**  
Ignoring motion restrictions or returning to activity too soon **increases the risk of repair failure.**
  - Please follow your protocol carefully to **optimize healing and long-term results.**
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## When to Contact the Office

Call if you experience:

- Fever >101.5°F
  - Excessive swelling or drainage from the incision
  - Numbness, tingling, or changes in hand/arm function
  - Uncontrolled pain or unusual discomfort
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## Follow-Up Appointment

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Location:** \_\_\_\_\_