

After Your Thumb Arthritis Surgery

Dr. Paul Nielsen

Dressings and Wound Care

- After surgery you will have a bulky splint on holding your thumb in position to heal
- Leave the splint in place until follow up
 - You must cover the splint for showering to keep it dry
- Call our office at 308-865-2570 if something happens to your splint

Pain Medicine

- NSAIDs such as ibuprofen or naproxen are recommended to improve pain after surgery in addition to prescription pain medication
- You will be prescribed a strong pain medication, such as hydrocodone and oxycodone, to control your pain after surgery
 - You should start taking pain medication as soon as you start getting feeling back, indicating the nerve block is wearing off to avoid rebound pain
 - You are allowed to drive when you are not taking prescription pain medication

Activity

- You may bend the tip of your thumb up and down starting the day after surgery
 - Do not use your thumb tip to grip or pinch against
- You are encouraged to **fully move your index, middle, ring, and small fingers** in the splint
- Elevation of your hand above your elbow and heart is recommended for the first few days

Follow-Up Care

- You will have an appointment in clinic 10-14 days after surgery to remove sutures
 - Additional appointments are at 4, 6, and 10 weeks after surgery
- You will change to a smaller removable splint at 2 weeks and then 4 weeks after surgery
 - Full time splinting continues until 6 weeks after surgery
- Formal therapy is usually started at 4 weeks after surgery
 - Most of the therapy can be done as home exercises
- You will have no restrictions on thumb use 10 weeks after surgery

Results

- Soreness and stiffness often persists until 2-3 months after surgery
- Most patients eventually regain full functional range of motion with minimal pain