

ARTHROSCOPIC DECOMPRESSION +/- ACJ EXCISION +/- BICEPS RELEASE

We have completed the surgery and now move on to the recovery phase of your treatment. Below is a guide to prepare you for what is in store with answers to the most commonly asked questions.

The surgery is typically done with both a general anaesthetic and a nerve block. The nerve block involves injecting local anaesthetic around a leash of nerves in your neck. When you wake up your whole arm will be numb. You have not had a stroke – it is the nerve block working. It typically provides very good pain relief for 8-16 hours after the surgery. You will typically feel sensation return, starting from your fingertips and then moving towards the shoulder. The block can occasionally affect the ability of the diaphragm on that side of your lungs to be weak and this can make people feel breathless. Let your nurse know if that is the case and we will keep some oxygen running overnight. Rarely the pupil in the eye on the side of your surgery will dilate (get bigger) and this may cause some mild blurring of vision. These issues will cease once the block has worn off. Until the block has completely work off you must not remove your sling.

The surgery you have had has not involved reattaching structures so we do not need to protect the shoulder from a movement point of view as such. I generally recommend wearing the sling pretty much full time for the first 3-5 days to let the dust settle. This is really done as a pain relieving measure. You can take it off for showering during this period. After 3-5 days, if your pain allows it, you can remove the sling for light waist level activities. Avoid any lifting or strenuous activity for at least the fist 3-4 weeks.

From the day after your operation I want you to start finger and wrist movement exercises. A squeeze ball is good – use it in the same hand as your operated shoulder.

For the first 2 weeks your pain management is as follows:

1. Regular paracetamol or panadol osteo (breakfast, lunch and dinner)
2. Anti-inflammatory (ibuprofen 400mg breakfast, lunch and dinner) OR meloxicam 7.5mg (breakfast and dinner)
3. Endone 5mg every 6 hours as required – use as much of this as you need BUT AS LITTLE AS YOU CAN

The dressings on your wounds are waterproof and generally work well. You can shower once a day but have the water hitting you from the opposite side. If the dressings do get wet underneath, or fall off, replace them with some waterproof ones from your local chemist or call my rooms and I can provide some.

Sleeping is often an issue after shoulder surgery. Most patients report feeling more comfortable if they are semi reclined or propped up a bit. If you have a recliner use it. If not use an extra couple of pillows. You can also take an over the counter sleeping tablet such as restavit. This is an anti histamine. Some people get quite a hangover effect from this medication so start with half a tablet and see how you go. You could safely use a full tablet a night for the first couple of weeks after your operation if it works and it is not giving you any side effects.

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I will catch up with you at the 2 week mark post-op. This appointment is to check your wounds, to make sure your pain is adequately managed and to discuss the surgical findings. I want you to start some formal physiotherapy after this appointment. Certainly after the 2 week mark you should be spending most or all of your time out of the sling. You can sleep out of the sling whenever you want to – some people like the sling for sleeping, others don't – it's up to you.

I will generally then catch up with you in another 6 weeks to see how you are going. By this stage your shoulder will still ache a bit but you should have near full range of motion and things should be improving. It takes a full 12 weeks to fully settle after an arthroscopic decompression and you should continue physiotherapy until you are happy with the outcome.

You can start swimming after 4 weeks, surfing after 6-8 weeks (provided you can comfortably swim) and you can ease back into your golf game (putting to short game to abbreviated back swing to full back swing) after 4-6 weeks. If you have any other sports specific questions please ask but essentially as your pain settles you can do whatever you want to, so long as it is not aggravating pain.

If I did a biceps release, you may experience some ache in the biceps muscle and some bruising in the upper arm. The bruising will settle over a few weeks but the ache in the muscle can take 8-10 weeks to fully settle. Don't worry – it will go away. As your biceps is settling you can gradually increase your lifting limit. There is no set amount you can or can't lift - your pain is the guide.

Well done getting to this point. See you soon. Call the rooms if you have any worries or concerns

Regards,
Luke McDermott.