

## STANDARD PROCEDURES: TOTAL ELBOW REPLACEMENT

Josef K. Eichinger

Medical University of South Carolina



### TOTAL ELBOW REPLACEMENT

*As part of an intensive home care Physical Therapy program, clients with a successful surgical course will be discharged to home post-op day #1.*

**Splint:** An anterior splint will be applied immediately after surgery and will remain in place for 10-14 days until the first post-op appointment.

**Wound care: Keep the splint and dressing in place and do not remove.**

No suture or staples will need to be removed. The wound is covered by an adhesive material called Dermabond PRINEO and this dressing is applied under sterile conditions in the operating room. This dressing will remain in place for 3 weeks from the day of surgery. You or your therapist can remove the Dermabond PRINEO dressing (Need image of Dermabond PRINEO Dressing). You can shower after the splint is removed but no baths saunas or submersion in pools or water until a minimum of 4 weeks after surgery.

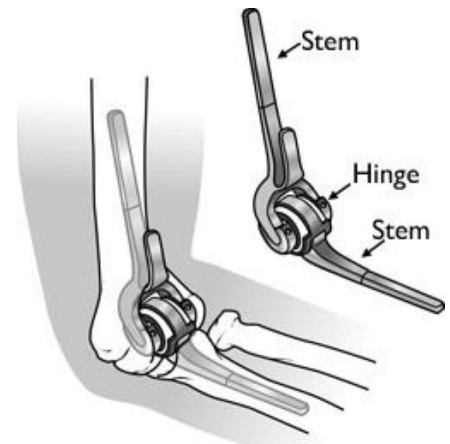
**Medications:**

- Pain medication as ordered by physician.
- Patient to check with physician prior to resuming any medications regime from prior to surgery.
- Patient may use laxative of choice.
- Patient may use Tylenol 650 mg every 4 hours for temperature of 101 degrees or higher.
- IV antibiotics per prescription (if ordered)

**Post-Op Findings:** Swelling, erythema, or ecchymosis is normal and it may be warm to the touch.

**Physician Communication:**

1. The physician will see the patient in his office 10-14 days after surgery, then at 6 weeks, 3 months, then as physician requests.
2. Nurses and therapists should contact the physicians for any abnormal observations or for emergencies.
3. General medical problems should be reported to the primary physician, not the orthopaedic specialist.
4. The Physical Therapist will send a written note to the physician to be faxed, or brought in with patient at their first post-op visit. This progress summary will include concise overview including ROM, functional abilities, limitations, and goals. Compliance and motivation may also be addressed.



Components of a total elbow replacement, Orthoinfo.aaos.org

### Information for Physical Therapy

*Dr. Eichinger performs triceps sparing approach for the total elbow replacement which allows for unrestricted motion and strengthening in the post-op period after the splint is removed. Revision surgery may or may not allow for unrestricted motion and the last paragraph of the OP Report lists the specific restrictions and general rehab plan. Patients receive a copy of their operative report at the first post-op clinic visit 10-14 days after surgery.*

**Frequency and duration:** 3 times per week from initiation of therapy 4 weeks post-op

**Treatment:** The patient will begin gentle AROM and (self) AAROM of the hand and wrist while in the splint 24 hours after surgery as tolerated. Elbow flexion and extension, forearm supination and pronation should be restricted until the splint is removed at 10-14 days post-op.

### **Plan of Care:**

- Functional activities and ADL's: Dressing, bathing, driving, kitchen ADL
- Instruction to patient/caregiver in home exercise program.
- Gait training on level and un-level surfaces and stairs
- Transfer training: sit to stand, bed, shower, car
- Balance and proprioceptive activities
- Instruction in precautions regarding this diagnosis

### **ADL's:**

Patient is allowed and encouraged to use the involved UE for ADL's after the splint is removed at 10-14 days after surgery

### **Precautions:**

- Maximum lifting- 10 lb for 6 weeks
- Long term- 25-30 lbs maximum lift performed one time, 10-15 lb maximum lift repeated
- May use arm for lift and support for wheelchair and walker after 10-14 days after surgery.

### **Findings to report to Physical Therapy:**

Including but not limited to:

1. Change in neurovascular status
2. Temperature over 101.5 degrees longer than 4 hours
3. Drainage after post-op day 5
4. Foul smelling, purulent drainage
5. Dehiscence of wound

## **Information for the Patient**

### **GOALS:**

1. Independent home exercise program
2. Independent bed, chair, and shower transfer
3. Independent emergency evacuation (enter and exit residence)
4. Independent bathing
5. Independent sit to stand
6. Independent car transfer
7. Demonstrate knowledge of precautions
8. Elbow AROM 0- 150 degrees at 4 weeks post-op
1. \*PT- Please send/fax a progress summary every other week to Dr. Eichinger

**Physical therapy:** Physical therapy may be provided in your home to instruct you in exercises and precautions following total elbow replacement.

**Exercises and range of motion:** You will begin gentle active range of motion of the elbow at 10-14 days after surgery. Elbow flexion and extension, forearm supination and pronation should be performed 2-3 times per day, 15 reps each time. You may perform all motions that do not increase your pain. Your motion will gradually increase. **May begin triceps without restriction at 10-14 days after surgery. Exercises should be performed to enhance function, not progressive resistance weight lifting.**

**Range of motion goals:** You may not be able to completely straighten your elbow following your replacement surgery. An appropriate range of motion goal is 30-130 degrees.

**Functional Activities:** You are permitted to use your operated arm to assist in your regular daily functional activities. This includes bathing, dressing, eating, driving, grooming. **You may use your operated arm to push up from sitting immediately if you underwent a primary total elbow arthroplasty with a triceps sparing approach.**

**Lifting:** 10-15 lbs maximum lifting for repetitive events, 20-30 lbs maximum for single events

### **General information**

- **Doctor visits:** 10-14 days, 6 weeks, and 3 months, then as physician request
- **Driving:** Initiated at approximately 2-3 weeks
- **Hospital stay:** 23 hours- one night after surgery
- **Home preparation:** Pick up loose rugs. Make sure you have a non-slip bathmat as well as a shower mat.
- **Medication:** Per physician's orders given at hospital discharge
- **Nursing:** 1-2 visits to admit patient and instruct wound care, signs and symptoms of infection and assess medications.
- **Shower:** After splint removal (10-14 days post-op)