

Provider: Okechukwu Nwoko, MD

Frequently Asked Questions

The below information is meant to answer patient frequently asked questions. If you need further clarification or have additional questions, please call our office at (919) 232-5020 or visit our website at www.wakeortho.com.

How do I take care of my cast?

The cast should be kept dry at all times. This includes use of waterproof or plastic covering during showers with sealant at the end which can include tape or rubber band. You could also purchase a cast cover locally or online for protection that can be sealed manually for pool or shower use. The options for waterproof casts are available to those who qualify for it based on their restrictions. However, it is important to note that when the cast has a bend to it such as a long-arm cast, water can collect at the corners/bend and lead to skin problems. Please ask your doctor about this.

How long does it take the anesthesia block to wear off after surgery?

The length of time varies with the type of anesthesia used as well as the patient's metabolism. On average, it should take approximately 14 hours to wear off. There have been some instances of this taking up to 24 hours before complete resolution of the block. I usually recommend staying inside the sling to protect the arm during that time so you do not hurt yourself. Also, I recommend starting your pain medication before the block wears off to stay ahead of the pain. This can be before going to bed or when you notice changes of that body part which can include tingling sensation or regaining movements.

How do I take care of my pin sites?

For some patients after surgery, when the pins are exposed, I usually recommend keeping them dry at all times. Also, daily use of Q-tips with peroxide to clean around the pins is recommended to prevent infections or irritations. The area should be covered and kept dry for showers. Usually, the pins stay in until the injury is completely healed, approximately 6 to 8 weeks, and then removed in the office.

What should I be worried about after steroid injections?

The injection is a cocktail of lidocaine (numbing medication) and cortisone (steroid treatment medicine). Right after the injection, the area can burn for a few seconds and then becomes numb which can last for a few hours. For some patients, there is also a flare-up phase after the lidocaine wears off that can last for a few hours causing discomfort. This

varies for different patients. I recommend placing ice on that site when you get home for about 30 minutes at a time to help with the swelling and pain. Also, restrict your activities for that day as well. The medication does not work right away but may take up to a week to notice the positive effects. Those who are diabetic may notice a rise in their blood sugar which they need to check daily for up to a week if necessary. Any significant jump or uncontrollable spike in your sugar may require calling your primary care doctor for advice.

What are some good ways to take care of my surgery scar?

There are many ways to take care of the scars. I recommend, after the wound has healed, deep tissue scar massage with use of Vitamin E lotion (ex. including Mederma, Lubriderm, or Eucerin). This helps the collagen (scar tissue) mature well. There are other products as well, please ask your doctor about them before use. Work on passive range of motion and stretches multiple times daily. There are some people who produce too much scar outside the normal range, such as keloid. In these cases, some patients may require an injection to slow down the process.

My doctor recommended that I get an elbow padded brace to help, where could I purchase them?

These can be purchased at a retail store online. Examples include below:

- [Amazon.com : elbow pads](#)
- [Revgear 52206 BLACK Elbow Pad - Pair - Black - Walmart.com](#)
- [Elbow Protection and Supports | Tennis Elbow Brace | Elbow Guard - DISCOUNT - Heelbo \(rehabmart.com\)](#)

Can I drive in a cast?

It is possible to drive while in the cast or splint depending on the design. When your right hand is involved, there are things to take into consideration. This includes how much torque or weight restriction your doctor has allowed especially when dealing with a stick shift. Be safe and avoid highways because of the speed and reaction time required. One should not be taking narcotic medication or muscle relaxers when operating a motor vehicle or heavy machinery. Please talk to doctor about when it is safe to drive while in a cast.

If my dressings were removed right after surgery, when can I take a shower?

If your doctor has recommended that your incision can get wet after removal of your dressings, generally 3 to 5 days after surgery. It is usually okay to take a shower with the surgery site hanging downwards to let the water run off to the floor with gentle drying of the site or suture area. Do NOT submerge the area in water such as washing dishes, baths,

or pools until the wound has completely closed. This can last from 2 to 4 weeks after the surgery. Your surgeon will be able to tell you when this is possible. If the surgery site appears to be getting worse or infected, contact your doctor immediately.

Where can I attend my therapy sessions?

Your therapy can be performed at any facilities including the Wake Orthopaedics locations; with our occupational and physical therapists being directly supervised by the surgeon. It is important to note, surgery of the upper extremity generally requires an occupational therapist's supervision versus physical therapist. This includes a certified hand therapist needed if a molded splint is required.

What kind of hardware was used to fix my wrist fracture?

If a metal plate was used to fix the wrist, this plate is usually placed on the palm side. The length of the plate is dependent on the fracture pattern which can be 2 to 3 inches long and as thick as a few pieces of paper. Multiple small screws are needed based on the complexity. The hardware metals are usually titanium but can be a stainless-steel alloy as well. They tend to have very little density so it's unlikely the hardware will set off metal detectors. Also, the hardware is low-profile, so they won't need to come out in the future. However, the scars in the area might remain in the future.

How do I help the side effects of my [narcotic] pain medications?

There can be many side effects to taking narcotics which includes hydrocodone, oxycodone, etc. Side effects include headache, nausea, vomiting, constipation, loss of appetite and drowsiness. Take just enough medications to control your pain symptoms especially right after surgery. Take your medications with food that includes protein and a high fiber diet to help with constipation if present. You may also ask your doctor for anti-nausea medication if needed. Be careful mixing multiple medications that can cause drowsiness as this may lead to further complications. If you are taking acetaminophen (ex. Tylenol) as well, make sure you are not taking more than the recommended dosage since your narcotic medications may also include acetaminophen.

What can I do to help my bone heal faster?

Usually, the most common problem is related to diet. I always recommend improving your calcium-Vitamin D intake daily. This can be as simple as adding more milk, yogurt, or cheese. Other options include multivitamins, calcium pills, or even TUMS® as chewable tablets. Smoking or use of nicotine products has been shown to slow down bone

formation. Therefore, I always recommend quitting, or at least decreasing smoking, when possible.