

Dr. Allen Thumb UCL Reconstruction Post-Op Instructions

Dressings

A thumb spica splint will be placed at the end of the surgery. Keep the splint and your surgical dressings in place until the first post-op visit at 2 weeks. Use a bag over your arm or take sponge baths during this time. After your first visit your splint will be removed and exchanged for a brace. This brace can be removed for hygiene. Make sure to wash your hands before touching the skin around your incision. Dressings can be removed and replaced with clean, fresh gauze, make sure to keep the wound covered until it is fully healed. It is ok to shower at 2-weeks post-op. Allow clean water to wash over the wound, do not scrub or wash it with any soaps. Your wound was likely closed with absorbable sutures and glue. Do not pick at or remove any scabs or loose glue ends, they will fall off on their own. It is ok to lotion the skin surrounding the incision, but don't place any lotion or ointment directly on the wound. Once you've showered and replaced the dressings, replace your brace.

Pain Control

Pain control is a very important aspect of your recovery. It is well documented that multimodal pain control is the most effective way to manage post-operative pain. At the end of the procedure, I will inject local anesthetic into the surgical field. Typically, only a few narcotics are required after thumb UCL surgery. The narcotic prescription is to be used for break through pain. Combining the narcotic pain medications with Tylenol and Ibuprofen has been shown to give superior pain relief compared to the narcotic alone. The goal is to use the narcotic pain medications sparingly and discontinue its use within a few days. Ice and elevation for the first several days after your surgery will also help control your pain.

Nausea

Nausea after surgery and anesthesia is not uncommon. You will receive an anti-nausea medication prescription for use at your discretion.

Constipation

Narcotic pain medications can be very constipating. You will receive a stool softening medication. I recommend you take it as long as you are taking the narcotics. Make sure to drink plenty of water as well in the immediate post-operative period.

Movement/Exercise

Begin moving the fingers the day of surgery. Gentle motion early on is essential to prevent stiffness post-op. Move your elbow and shoulder several times a day. No forceful grasping, pinching, or squeezing with the affected hand/thumb. Doing so can risk damaging the repair while it heals.

Therapy

Typically, you will see therapy 2 weeks post-op, generally on the same day as your first post-op visit. The thumb will get very stiff after surgery, and early motion with therapy is essential to a good outcome.

Follow Up

Your first follow up is around 2 weeks after surgery. We will inspect the wound, remove any sutures, assess your motion, and schedule any additional therapy appointment as needed.