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Guidelines & tips:
Upper extremity surgery



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Daily guidelines and tips for your upper extremity surgery

Following your surgery, certain tasks may require that you modify the way you approach them. To ensure proper recovery, we recommend that you read our guidelines and tips in order to prepare and plan the days following your surgery.

The key to success is to plan ahead!

- Establish priorities and plan ahead to allow for some time to regularly raise the affected limb which reduces the swelling.
- Plan alternatives to activities and tasks that may require both your hands such as driving, cooking and doing the dishes.
- Certain tasks may require more time to complete with only one hand, allow for more time to complete tasks without pressure.

General guidelines for most tasks

- Protect your wound, keep the bandages dry.
- Make sure that the affected limb is higher than the heart to keep the swelling to a minimum.

Guidelines and tips for everyday problems

Resting and sleeping :

- When lying down, use pillows or cushions to raise the affected limb in order to reduce swelling.
- Try to keep the affected limb higher than the heart when watching TV or resting (example: lying down in a « Lazyboy » or on the sofa with pillows to raise the affected limb).

In the kitchen :

- Since you will only be able to use one hand, plan meals before your surgery and for the upcoming post operative weeks.
- Since you will only be able to use one hand, try to plan lighter meals or they might be too heavy to move around with.
- Plan simple meals that don't require much preparation.
- It might be difficult to do the dishes since you will only be able to use one hand. Get help, buy disposable dishes or use your dishwasher, if you have one.

Washing your clothes :

- Wash all your clothes before the surgery.
- Try to keep your clothing basket as light as possible since you will only be using one hand.

Buying groceries or shopping :

- Plan all purchases before your surgery.
- If you need to make purchases after your surgery, buy smaller quantities because you will only be able to hold bags with one hand. Also, try to use a shopping cart.

Getting dressed :

- Start with the affected limb (put your shirt on by starting with the affected arm and moving on to the other arm).
- Make sure you follow the recommendations if you are wearing a splint.

Driving :

- Get help for driving and wait until the physiotherapist gives you the 'go' before driving on your own.

Hygiene :

- Avoid showers or baths after the surgery.
- Instead of a shower or a bath, use a clean cloth and some water.
- Get help to wash your hair since you cannot take a shower and you will only be able to use one hand.