



**Dr Jonathan Herald**

Shoulder, Elbow, Knee Surgeon  
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**Orthoclinic**  
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## Post-Op Care Instructions and Exercises for Elbow Surgery

### POST OPERATIVE CARE

- Sling:** Your affected arm will be placed in a fitted sling designed to take the weight of your arm and support your elbow. This will help the repair heal and decrease the pain so it is important that you relax your muscles when in it. The sling may be taken off when showering, sitting or lying down, but the arm must be supported. You will need to wear your sling for at most 3 weeks.
- At Home:** You can use your arm in the sling for light activities such as writing, typing and using a knife and fork. It is important to come out of the sling 4-5 times per day to straighten your elbow and exercise your shoulder, wrist and fingers to keep your joints mobile and strong. Squeezing a ball is a good way to do this.
- Dressings:** Keep the outer bandage on for 1 to 2 days if it stays dry and clean. After this you can remove it. To keep the outer bandage dry please shower with a plastic bag. Once removed the underneath dressings are waterproof but if soiled see me or your GP to get them changed as soon as possible.
- Sutures:** You will have buried, dissolving skin sutures that do not need to be removed.
- Analgesia:** A prescription has been provided by either myself, my assistant or my anaesthetist for analgesics. Please be aware that codeine containing products such as Panadeine Forte may cause constipation and drowsiness and should be used sparingly and with a high fibre diet e.g. Metamucil.
- Rehabilitation:** Post-operative physiotherapy and home exercises are very important after surgery. Please follow the instructions shown later. You will be given a referral to formal physiotherapy which you should begin as soon as you can after leaving hospital. Without daily exercises you may end up with a stiff elbow. Please arrange an appointment for physio yourself. You may be given a CPM machine or brace post op if needed. Please take this booklet with you to your physiotherapy appointment.
- Follow-up:** You will also need to contact Orthopaedic Clinic Sydney on 02 9233 3946 to arrange a follow-up appointment to see me at around 10 to 14 days. If it is not possible to see me, please see your GP at this time.
- Driving a car:** You are not allowed to drive a car home after today's procedure. You are not safe to drive a car while your arm is in a sling.

### When to Worry:

- If you think you have an infection,
- Abnormal bleeding, a wound problem,
- A bandage that is too tight and cutting off your circulation,
- New numbness and tingling or any other emergency please contact the rooms immediately or failing that go back to hospital or see your GP.



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## After Your Arthroscopy



Arthroscopy is only part of the solution to a problem elbow. You play a major role: rehabilitation is essential to speed your healing and get you back to normal activities. Immediately after surgery, you'll spend a few hours in a recovery area. You will be given a sling, an ice pack, and pain medications to make you more comfortable. Once home, follow the previous advice about staying comfortable and taking steps to speed your healing. You will be referred to physiotherapy soon after surgery to improve your elbows range of motion and strength.

### After Surgery

During the first few days after surgery, do what you can to stay comfortable. Ice your elbow three times a day for about 20 minutes, and use a sling and pain medications. Move your arm and shoulder gently to help prevent stiffness and swelling. You will have a dressing change during your follow-up visit with me. If approved you may return to light work within a few days.



Elevating your arm and moving your fingers will help keep the swelling down. You may need some pain medication after surgery



The sling will help reduce pain by resting the joint.



Your dressings will be changed during a follow-up visit.



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## After Your Arthroscopy

### Physiotherapy

You will have a referral for a program of exercise and other therapy beginning as early as the first week after surgery. Designed to get you back to normal activities, your personalised program is tailored to your specific type of elbow problem and surgery. Stretches will help restore your elbow's range of motion. When it is comfortable for you, your physiotherapist will teach you strengthening exercises.



Increasing flexion and extension range of motion



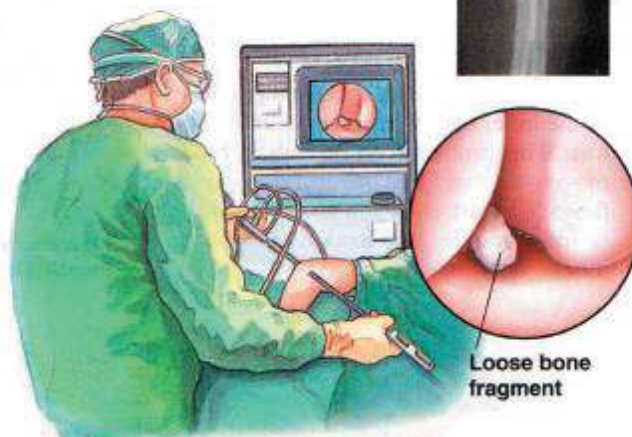
Increasing rotational and range of motion

### Follow-up Visit

During your follow up visit we will go through the findings during surgery and your monitor your progress with rehabilitation. Set yourself goals for the next visit.



X-rays



Loose bone fragment



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## Personal Exercise Program

### Elbow Passive Range of Motion



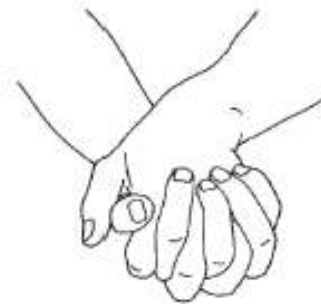
Stand leaning on a table with straight arms, palms against a table and fingers turned backwards. Shift your body weight backwards until you can feel the stretch on the inside of your forearms. Hold stretching approx. 20 seconds - relax. Repeat 10 times.



Stand. Grasp the wrist of the arm you want to exercise. Bend your elbow and assist the movement with your other hand. Straighten your elbow. Repeat 10 times.



Stand. Rotate the arm to be stretched inwards with elbow straight, palm turned outwards. Clasp the fingers with the other hand as shown in the picture. Bend the wrist and pull the forearm inwards until you feel the stretching in your forearm. Stretch approx. 20 seconds - relax. Repeat 10 times.



Clasp your hands together and support your forearms on a table. Put the back of one hand on the table and then turn your hands and put the back of the other hand on the table. Repeat 10 times.