TOTONCHI
PLASTIC SURGERY

Care after Arm Lift (Brachioplasty)

This page contains answers to frequently asked questions regarding your care after an arm lift. This information will help you remember the instructions given to you after surgery.

Appearance:

- The incisions will be covered with clear, non-stick gauze and a white gauze dressing held in position usually with ace wraps
- Do not change your dressing. When we change your first dressing you will be provided with elastic tube gauze that helps to control the swelling in both your forearms and arms.
- Your hands and forearms may feel swollen and tight. Temporary numbness in the arms and/or proximal forearms is normal.
- It is recommended that you use these compression garments for **12 weeks after your surgery.**

Activity/Bathing/Sleeping:

- You should take it easy for several days following the surgery and gradually increase your activity as you feel more comfortable.
- Avoid heavy exercise also during this time and only gradually return to your normal routine. You can resume all of your normal activities about 3-4 weeks after surgery.
- You will initially need to be careful when raising or moving your arms until your incisions are healed.
- You generally should be able to drive about three to five days after surgery if you feel up to it. **You should never drive if you are still taking any pain medication other than Tylenol.**
- If your job does not require heavy activity, you should be able to go back in 1-2 weeks.
- Please bathe until your first follow-up appointment.
- You can normally shower after your first follow-up visit using a mild fragrance-free soap such as Ivory or Dove. Avoid using very hot water.
- Your arms will be tender, so wash this area gently and pat dry with a clean towel.

Drain/Incision Care:

- Your drains are held in place with stitches to your skin and should always be supported to avoid pulling on the drain.
- Monitor your drain output daily and record on the sheet given at your pre-operative appointment. Please bring the drain sheet to your post op

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appointments. The “How to care for your drain” pamphlet has more detailed information.
- Drains are generally removed within 5 to 7 days after your surgery.
- Once we have removed your dressings, clean your incisions with a Q-tip and warm water; then apply bacitracin to your incisions. Do this at least twice a day.
- After 1 week of applying bacitracin, please switch to Aquaphor or moisturizing lotion.
- You will be given elastic tube gauze for your arms at your 1 week post-operative appointment. You will wear these arm wraps for **4 weeks.**
- Avoid sun exposure and wear sunscreen with an SPF of 50+ to the incisions if sun exposure is unavoidable.
- Five weeks after surgery you may begin applying silicone based scar gel to help the appearance of your scars. Massage the gel into the scars in circular motions twice a day.

Diet:
- We recommend a diet consisting of high protein and easily digestible foods (i.e. toast, rice, bananas, eggs, chicken, oatmeal, protein shakes, etc.)
- Do not drink alcohol for a couple weeks after your surgery or while taking narcotic pain medicines
- Limit your salt intake to help decrease swelling. Please refer to the “Medications and Foods to Avoid” List provided in your Pre-Surgical email sent

Medication:
- We will prescribe an antibiotic, pain medication, and nausea medication for you to take after your surgery. Follow the directions on the bottles for their use.
- A stool softener (Colace) is recommended after surgery.
- The pain medication will make you feel drowsy.
- A few days after surgery, Tylenol usually will take care of the discomfort
- Do not use aspirin, ibuprofen (Motrin) or other NSAID medication for seven days after the surgery.

Post-Operative Appointments:
- You will normally be seen in the office within **two to five days of your surgery, then 1 week after surgery.**
- Additional appointments may be necessary and will be determined by your recovery

Recommended Supplies:
- Gauze, Q-tips, Bacitracin, and Aquaphor
- Extra Pillows for comfort
- Ice packs

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Post-Operative Concerns: Urgent problems after arm lift do not occur often. These are the complications that will require a change in your post-operative care:

- **Hematoma** (blood collecting under your arm incisions) can occur within a few days of your surgery. The warning signs are:
    - Severe pain that does not respond to medication
    - Significant swelling in your arms
    - Excessive or growing bruising of the arms
- **Infection** is rare following arm lift. It is normal to have a very small amount of drainage from your incisions for one to two days. Signs of infection are:
    - Increased temperature
    - Increasing drainage from the incisions
    - Increasing redness around the incisions
- **Leg swelling** (with or without associated pain) may indicate a problem with the vein circulation in your leg(s). Although some swelling is to be expected due to your surgery, intravenous fluids given to you during the surgery, and your decreased level of activity, this swelling is normally mild, painless, and affects both legs evenly. If you have a large amount of leg swelling (either one or both legs), or if you experience pain in your legs contact the office immediately.
- **Breathing problems** after arm lifts are rare but can be a serious complication. If you develop any chest and/or back pain or shortness of breath, you must contact our office or be seen in the nearest emergency medical facility without delay.
- **Medication reactions** may occur with the drugs prescribed for you. If you develop a skin rash, itching, vomiting, or diarrhea, stop taking your medication and contact my office.

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