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*If you have any questions or concerns, please call.*



## **Joint Arthritis**

You have been diagnosed with osteoarthritis. Osteoarthritis can be defined as degenerative arthritis. Osteoarthritis is a condition where the cartilage covering the ends of your bones wears down over time. This ultimately causes bone on bone friction within a joint resulting in a painful and/or stiff joint. While it is primarily a "wear and tear" process, there are other factors that play a role in degenerative arthritis. These include previous trauma or injury, repetitive stress over long periods of time, or simply just use.

## **Arthrodesis Surgery**

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During an arthrodesis, your joint will be fused together preventing the bone on bone friction which previously caused discomfort. Full fusion will take time to occur so you will be placed in a temporary splint to prevent flexion or extension of that joint. This splint will be bulky at first, but you should be scheduled to have a new splint made within 24- 48 hours after surgery.

This procedure is usually performed under General anesthesia which means you will be asleep during the procedure. Your procedure will take approximately 2 hours- including recovery time.

You will also be required to have a driver the day of surgery.

### **What to expect after surgery**

Depending on your job duties, you may be able to return to work under certain restrictions- provided you are no longer taking narcotic pain medication (You may wean into over the counter Tylenol, Ibuprofen, or Aleve for your symptoms as tolerated). You will need to avoid heavy lifting and submerging your hand in water until after your post-operative appointment with your surgeon. We suggest you speak with your employer regarding job demands to agree on an expected time of return.

Pain medication will be prescribed for post-operative pain relief. You will slowly wean from this medication over time as your symptoms subside. You may also experience some bruising and/or swelling. These symptoms may be alleviated through Ibuprofen or Aleve, elevation, and ice. (Please do not take additional Tylenol if you are taking narcotic pain medication; this already has Tylenol).

At some point after surgery you will visit with an occupational therapist. The occupational therapist will remove your bandages and create a custom made splint which you will wear at all times except for hygiene. This splint will only immobilize the surgical joint, allowing for full movement of your other digits. You will follow up with your surgeon for 7- 10 days after surgery for your post-operative visit.

Following your hand surgery, it may be difficult to open your medication bottles. If you prefer, you may request NON child-proof bottles from your pharmacist when dropping off prescriptions. However, please consider the risks if you have small children in your home or if any small children may be accessible to these medications.

### **Reasons to call our office**

Please call our office if you experience abnormal drainage (yellow or green), fever over 100°F, chills, increasing redness around the incision site, or side effects from your pain medication such as prolonged nausea.

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If you begin to experience difficulties with your custom made splint please contact your occupational therapist so they may make appropriate adjustments. The occupational therapist is aware that adjustments may need to be made over the course of time secondary to wear or fluctuating swelling.

**Please contact the office if you wish to take extended time for recovery or if your job requirements do not allow you to return. You may file FMLA or Short Term Disability paperwork. Contact our office at 913-652-6348 with any questions or concerns.**