
Answers to Frequently Asked Questions After Rotator Cuff Repair Surgery

Why do I need to wear the UltraSling?

- The UltraSling is an important tool to help your shoulder tissues heal.
- During surgery, I may reattach your rotator cuff tendons to the bone. In order for these tissues to heal together, they need to be held tightly in place. Think of gluing two rubber bands together. If the ends are moved or agitated in any way before the glue has set, the bond between the bands may either not hold or may not hold well. The longer the glue is able to set undisturbed, the stronger the bond will be.
- The UltraSling supports and stabilizes your arm, keeping weight off the tissues, thereby helping prevent them from pulling apart. If your arm hangs at your side, its weight pulls against the repaired tissues stressing the surgical repair. By supporting the weight of the arm, the UltraSling keeps the tissues quiet, allowing them to heal together. Also, the UltraSling protects your surgical repair by helping prevent reflexive or accidental movements, which may stress the repair.

How long do I need to wear the UltraSling?

- You need to wear the UltraSling when you are awake and while you sleep until the tissues heal by growing together, which takes four to six weeks.

What if I don't want to wear the UltraSling that long?

- You will risk pulling the tissues apart and weakening the repair.

May I take the UltraSling off some times?

- After the first week, you may remove the UltraSling when you are sitting. You should not allow the weight of your arm to pull on the rotator cuff, instead support your arm by keeping it on your lap. You may work at your desk with your hands in front of your body and your arm supported.

Do I have to sleep sitting up?

- Most people are more comfortable sleeping propped up for the first few nights post-operative. When it is comfortable for you to do so, you may sleep on your non-surgical side still with your arm in the UltraSling. Do not sleep on your side with the UltraSling down.

When can I drive?

- Usually, you can drive after one week, but do not drive until I clear you to do so. To drive, remove your UltraSling and use your repaired arm to hold the bottom of the steering wheel only. Do not actively use your arm to turn the steering wheel.

What else should I do to protect my shoulder as it heals?

- You should avoid the following:
 1. Do not reach up.
 2. Do not lift or hold heavy objects.
 3. Do not put your arm behind your back.

These motions put great stress on the surgical repair and risk pulling the repaired tissues apart.

What if my arm and forearm look swollen or bruised?

- Bruising and swelling within a week or ten days following surgery is normal. Bruising, which is a discoloration due to the break down in blood, results from the intentional release of bone marrow during surgery. Bone marrow is a rich source of both stem cells and growth factors; essential to the healing process. As for the swelling, this is a result of fluid used during arthroscopy becoming trapped in the tissues until it is slowly absorbed by your body. Exercising your elbow, wrist and hand will help dissipate the excess fluid.
- In **very** rare instances, excess swelling can be a sign of a blood clot (i.e. DVT – please see sheet on DVT). If you have concerns that your swelling or the discoloration are in excess of what would normally be expected, please feel free to call us.