

## POSTOPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS: BRACHIOPLASTY (ARM LIFT)

**IMPORTANT:** Some swelling of the surgery site is expected. Call Dr. Holzman immediately if you notice sudden enlargement or abnormal swelling of the surgically treated areas, have sharp, continuous pain that is not relieved by pain medication, or if you notice excessive, bright red blood soaking your dressing.

**FIRST 24 HOURS:** Take your pain and nausea medications at regular intervals. A light diet is best for the day of surgery. Begin by taking liquids slowly and progress to soups and Jell-O if desired. You may advance to a regular diet the next day as tolerated. Generally, you will not need to check the incisions or dressings. All should be left intact until your first postoperative visit with Dr. Holzman. You may feel drowsy for the first 24-48 hours, and may require help the first few times that you get out of bed. Avoid using your arms to move yourself as this may cause too much pressure on the sutures. Adjust the compression dressings if you notice numbness or tingling in your fingers. If that does not relieve the numbness, contact Dr. Holzman. Avoid all strenuous activity.

**DRESSINGS:** Dr. Holzman will dress your surgical site with gauze and ACE wraps during surgery. Wear the wraps continuously until your first postoperative visit with Dr. Holzman, which is usually 3-5 days after your surgery. During the first postoperative visit, Dr. Holzman will remove the wraps to check your incision sites, and will place your arms in a compression garment. He will usually give you permission at that time to remove the garment for showering and laundering purposes. When you shower, pat the incision sites dry before replacing the compression garment. You may apply gauze to the incisions (panty liners work great!) to absorb any drainage, as it will help keep the garment clean and dry. Apply Aquaphor 1-2 times daily to the incisions to keep them supple. The garment may be washed in cold water and dried on the air-dry cycle of your dryer. The compression garment is usually worn for 18 hours per day for 6 weeks as it helps to decrease bruising and swelling which will aid healing.

**ACTIVITY:** It is important to be out of bed and walking early and frequently. Move your legs and ankles when in bed. Strenuous activity should be avoided for at least 2 weeks. Do not lift more than 15 pounds. Be careful climbing stairs and getting out of bed. You may not drive a car while you are taking narcotic pain medications. Make sure to discuss your activity limitations at

each office visit with Dr. Holzman. All patients heal differently, and Dr. Holzman can guide you to the appropriate activity level to help speed your recovery.

**PAIN MANAGEMENT:** Dr. Holzman will prescribe a narcotic pain medication and a medicine to control nausea. Take both of the medications as scheduled in the first 24-48 hours after surgery. After that time, you may simply take them as needed, and consider taking them at night to improve your rest. Pain is best controlled if you take medicine when you first feel pain, or even ahead of time. After the first 24-48 hours, you may switch to non-narcotic pain medications if desired. Ibuprofen 600mg (three tablets) taken every 8 hours provides excellent pain control and reduces postoperative inflammation. Take ibuprofen (brand names: Advil or Motrin) with food to avoid stomach upset. Refer to the more comprehensive Pain Management instruction sheet in your packet for more information.

**HEALING:** First of all, listen to your body and do not push yourself too quickly. Adequate rest is important and will allow your body to heal. Swelling is to be expected after surgery, and most swelling will resolve within the first 12 weeks. Some swelling may persist for up to 6 months, and may appear after exertion. This is caused by lymphatic fluids occupying the space left after the fatty deposits were removed and by fluid retention from your IV. Your body will slowly absorb the lymphatic fluid over time. Discoloration from bruising is expected and most will resolve in 3-4 weeks. Take your Arnica tablets as prescribed by Dr. Holzman. Avoid sun and tanning bed exposure to prevent permanent discoloration in the bruised areas. Most patients experience areas of numbness in the surgical sites. The sensation will return to these areas after a few months as the nerves that serve the skin regenerate. During this time, you may experience some itching. Benadryl can relieve the itching if it occurs. Do not use heating pads or warm compresses in areas that are numb, as this may lead to a burn injury. Generally, patients begin feeling much better after the first 2 weeks, and are back to their normal routine after 6 weeks; however, all patients are unique in their recovery, so be kind to yourself during this time.

**FINAL COMMENTS:** Dr. Holzman is committed to making sure that you have the best result possible. Please communicate any problems to him before or after your surgery so that he can optimize your results and experience. Do not hesitate to contact the office or staff during office hours for any questions, and call after hours for any emergency.