

Small-Medium Rotator Cuff Tear Surgery - Recovery Guide

Discharge

You may be discharged on the day of surgery, or spend a night in hospital.

Sling

The sling is to be worn for 4-6 weeks unless advised otherwise.

You may come out of the sling when sitting comfortably in a chair, using a computer, eating, and performing exercises.

Bandage / Dressings / Sutures

You will be discharged from hospital with a dressing covering your shoulder wound. Leave the dressing in place until your 2-3 week review and we will remove it. The dressings are water resistant. Showering is fine but please keep your dressings relatively dry until your post op review.

Swelling / Icing

Post-operative swelling of the shoulder is normal and should gradually decrease over the course of a few weeks.

Swelling often occurs in the arm and hand due to immobilisation in a brace/sling. Regular icing is effective for managing both pain and swelling for up to 10 days.

Elevation of the hand higher than elbow, and elbow higher than shoulder while resting will also help alleviate swelling.

If the swelling worsens, or if you notice redness around the wound or experience a fever, please contact our office immediately or see your local doctor. For after-hours concerns, you can also reach out to the hospital emergency department.

Pain Relief / Medications (*allergies permitting*)

Your anaesthetist will have prescribed a range of painkillers for you to go home with. You should take them as prescribed. In general you should take paracetamol regularly, followed by anti-inflammatories if prescribed and then strong painkillers (such as Palexia/ Tapentadol) for top-up pain relief. Cease these medications as soon as the pain allows.

Dr Robinson recommends taking Vitamin C 1000-1500 mg daily from 2 days prior to surgery until at least 3 weeks post the surgery.

Post-Operative Appointments

2-3 weeks: Your first post op clinic review. A nurse will remove your dressing and review your wound.

3 months: Review to see how you are progressing

Return to Work / Driving

A reasonable goal for returning to office work is within 2-4 weeks.

For more physically demanding jobs, the target is typically 3-4 months on limited duties.

Driving can usually be resumed around 8 weeks.

It is important to note that you may not be covered by your car insurance if you are involved in a motor vehicle accident before 6 weeks.

Return to Activities guide

Running: 10 weeks

Swimming: Water walking 8 weeks, breast stroke 3-4 months, freestyle 6 months

Tennis: 6-9 months

Golf: 6 months

Gym based activities may commence at 4-6 months with modification.