



Dr. Ryan Degen, MD  
Fowler Kennedy Sport Medicine Clinic - 3M Centre  
Western University, 1151 Richmond Street, London ON N6A 3K7  
Office: 519-661-2171 Fax: 519-661-4237

## Rotator Cuff Repair - Post-Operative Instructions

### **DAY OF SURGERY:**

1. Your arm will be immobilized in a sling, which will be applied in the operating room. You should continue to use the sling for the first 6 weeks, unless working with your physiotherapist. Further instructions on duration of bracing and physiotherapy will be provided at your first post-operative visit.
2. You will meet a physiotherapist in the recovery room. They will instruct you on exercises that you can begin starting tomorrow. They will also provide instructions for removing/applying the sling.
3. The sling should be used while you sleep, in which case you may find it easier to sleep in a semi-reclined position for the first few nights until more comfortable. You may remove the sling to shower (instructions on wound care below) but should keep the arm across your chest while showering.
4. Ice should be applied regularly on the first post-operative day, approximately 5-6x per day, for approximately 20 minutes at a time.
5. Prescriptions for pain medication will be given to you when you leave. You should avoid taking pain medications on an empty stomach, as it will make you nauseous. Otherwise, use the pain medication **ONLY** as needed.

### **DAY 1 AND UNTIL FIRST POST-OP VISIT:**

1. Continue to apply ice approximately 2-3 times a day. You may use it more frequently if you are having continued pain and swelling.
2. Wound care
  - a. You may remove the dressing on post-op day #2 and apply band-aids to wound sites to be changed daily for 10-14 days.



- b. Please do not use polysporin or other ointments under the bandage as the wounds should be allowed to dry.
        - c. You may shower on post-op day #3 if the incisions are dry. Cover your wounds with a waterproof band-aid or saran wrap secured with tape for your shower. After showering, gently pat the area dry and use regular band-aids over each incision throughout the day to allow the incisions to dry & heal.
        - d. Do not soak your shoulder in water or go swimming in a pool or in the ocean until your sutures are removed. Typically getting into a bath or pool is permitted 2 days after the sutures are removed, unless otherwise instructed.
        - e. Sutures will be removed at your 2 week appointment,
          - i. The date for this appointment will be provided before leaving the hospital on the day of your operation
3. Continue to perform the exercises provided by the physiotherapist in the recovery room 2x day. Begin physiotherapy within the first 2 weeks after your surgery.
  - f. Unless otherwise specified, your physiotherapist should follow the available protocol on the Fowler Kennedy website:
    - [www.fowlerkennedy.com](http://www.fowlerkennedy.com) → Patient resources → Physiotherapy → 'Small Rotator Cuff Repair Protocol' or 'Large Rotator Cuff Repair Protocol', as specified by the surgical team
4. Work/School
  - a. You may return to sedentary work/school in the next couple of days when you feel up to it. You will need to continue using your sling for both.
5. Driving
  - a. Driving is permitted 2 weeks after the surgery if you meet the following criteria:
    - i. You no longer take narcotic pain medications
    - ii. You drive an automatic car. If you have a manual car, you could drive after 6 weeks.
    - iii. You can safely get in and out of your car. Please ask your physical therapist for instructions.