



WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER AC JOINT SURGERY

Clavicle injuries vary in their severity and the time it takes to heal can vary widely based on factors such as how many pieces the fracture is in, the overall health of the patient. Active range of motion of the elbow and wrist without weights or resistance is encouraged soon after surgery.

- **Motion:** Passive range of motion of the shoulder is begun week one post op in the form of pendulum exercises and gradually advanced.
- **Swelling:** It is not unusual to have swelling in the hand and arm with bruising after surgery. It is important to make a full fist with the operative hand, making every joint fully flex and extend many times per day. This will help with the hand swelling. Icing at the area of the incision for 20 minutes per hour also helps with swelling.
- **Dressings:** Dressings may be removed after one week from surgery. You may shower when the dressings come off. It is not unusual to have numbness at the incision for many weeks after surgery.
- **Lifting:** No lifting more than the weight of a coffee cup for 6 weeks after surgery.

Sling Use: For the first week, the sling should be used 80% of the time. You will wean sling use during the second and third weeks.

Driving: If you are still in the sling and if you are taking opioid pain medications you may not drive.

Week 0-2

Sling. May remove sling to do Pendulum exercises. No active shoulder motion.

Active Elbow and wrist ROM exercise are good, but no resisted exercises. Sling may be removed for exercises. May begin active-assisted motion. Continue pendulum exercises.

No lifting anything heavier than a coffee cup.

Weeks 2-5

May begin to wean from sling.

Active Range Of Motion ok.

No lifting anything heavier than a coffee cup.

Weeks 5 - 8

May begin to slowly incorporate resistance and strengthening exercises. May now use arm to lift nothing heavier than a coffee cup.

Weeks 8-12

May work on aggressive shoulder rehab to return to sports. Once painless shoulder function has been achieved and strength has returned, and an athlete has completed the return to play rehab, then an athlete may return to play.