

Dr. Ryan Tibbetts

Frequently Asked Questions

When do I change my dressing?

- For knee and shoulder arthroscopy surgeries, dressings may be removed and changed on post-op day #2. Dressing can be changed with gauze and tape or band-aids.
- For knee and shoulder replacement surgery, the operative dressing applied at the time of surgery will remain in place for one week. At one week, the dressing needs to be changed, using dressing provided at discharge from hospital. This will then remain in place until first post-op clinic visit to have staples and/or sutures removed.
- For fracture surgery with a splint in place, the splint should not be removed until first post-op clinic visit.

When can I shower after surgery?

- You may shower on post-op day #2 but need to keep incisions covered and dry. Waterproof band-aids or small gauze and waterproof tape work well. For knees, you can wrap the knee with plastic wrap for showering.
- For fracture surgery, splints need to be covered with plastic bag and tape or similar cast-type covering to remain dry.
- After sutures and/or staples are removed at first post-op visit, you may shower without the need to cover the incisions but need to avoid immersion in bath/pool/spa for 4 weeks.

What do I do if the bandages get wet?

- For knee and shoulder arthroscopy, go ahead and remove the dressing, dry the wounds and re-apply fresh dressing
- For knee or shoulder replacement surgery, it is important to keep the incision dry. If the occlusive dressing loses its seal and gets wet, you can remove it and apply the dressing provided at discharge from the hospital. If has already been used, then gauze and tape may be applied.
- For fracture surgery with a splint in place, try your best to dry the splint (ie - hair dryer) and call to make appt to come to clinic to have splint changed.

When do I start home exercise after surgery?

- Unless otherwise instructed, home exercise can begin on post-op day #1

What do I do if I can't feel the ice through the bandage/dressing?

- The initial post-op dressing can be bulky and you may not feel the effects of ice until after the first dressing change on post-op day #2.

When can I take the sling off?

- For most shoulder surgeries requiring sling, the sling is to be used for 4-6 weeks depending on the specific procedure. You may remove the sling 3-4 times a day for dressing, showering, and home exercise.

Can I drive?

- For knee arthroscopy procedures (specifically right knee), you may return to driving when they are able to walk unassisted, able to adequately respond to an emergent braking situation, and not impaired by post-op narcotic pain medications.
- For knee replacement surgery (specifically right knee), you may not drive for 6 weeks or until able to walk unassisted, able to adequately respond to an emergent braking situation, and not impaired by post-op narcotic pain medications.
- For ankle surgery (specifically right ankle), you may return to driving when they are able to walk unassisted, without boot, and able to adequately respond to an emergent braking situation, and not impaired by post-op narcotic pain medications.
- For shoulder surgery, you may return to driving (automatic transmission) when they are no longer impaired from post-op narcotic pain medications and unimpaired with driving predominantly with unaffected arm.

When do I start physical therapy?

- For shoulder arthroscopy and shoulder replacement surgery, PT will start at 4-6 weeks post-op. Until that point, you are responsible for home exercises as instructed after surgery.
- For knee replacement surgery, home health PT begins immediately post-op and transitions to outpatient PT at 2 weeks post-op.
- For knee arthroscopy surgery, PT depends on the procedure performed
 - ACL reconstruction – PT starts 2-3 days post-op
 - Meniscus repair – PT starts at 6 weeks
 - Partial meniscectomy – does not always require PT, patient dependent

Can I go swimming (beach, lake, pool, spa)?

- You will need to keep incisions covered and dry until sutures and/or staples are removed at first post-op clinic visit. At this point, you may begin showering without covering the incisions, but need to avoid immersion for 4 weeks post-op
- You may use waterproof bandages/band-aids to keep incisions covered and dry

When can I go back to work?

- Shoulder arthroscopy/replacement surgery – you may return to work in sling with light duty restrictions as soon as pain is controlled and there is no impairment related to scheduled use of narcotic pain medications.
- Knee arthroscopy surgery – depending on the specific procedure, you may return to physical work when ambulating without assistance and no longer requiring scheduled narcotic pain medications
- Knee replacement surgery – you may return to light duty at 4-6 weeks when ambulating without assistance and no longer requiring scheduled narcotic pain medications.

What to do if I need a medication refill?

- Pain medication refills may be requested by calling Dr. Tibbetts' dedicated patient line at 512-485-0531. It is best to request the refill at 24-48h prior to running out to prevent delay. This is also applies to weekends.

How long will I have the nerve block?

- Peripheral nerve blocks are frequently used and these can be either a single shot injection or an indwelling catheter and pump that remain in place for 48-72h. Capitol Anesthesia manages the pain pumps and should be calling after surgery to check on your status and help with any issues. For any questions pertaining to pumps please contact Capital Anesthesia at 512-454-2554.