

FAQ - Shoulder Arthroscopic Surgery / Subacromial Decompression / Debridement

(The questions and answers below are general guidelines for shoulder arthroscopies. Upon meeting with your physical therapist you will receive specific guidelines and instructions.)

Q: How long do I have to wear the sling?

A: Wear sling for one day after surgery and for up to five days when out in public (for safety reasons).

Q: When can I begin to use the arm after surgery?

A: You may begin to use the arm immediately after surgery as tolerated, unless otherwise indicated by your physician.

Q: How much/to what extent will I be able to use my arm?

A: You may use your arm as much as you are comfortable. Use common sense as a guide; listen to your shoulder, and stop any activity that irritates and increases pain.

Q: When do I start physical therapy?

A: You will begin physical therapy the day after surgery. This will include a bandage change, as well as an evaluation by a trained physical therapist. This will last 3-6 weeks depending on your progress. The sessions will last approximately 1 hour, with a frequency of 2-3 time per week.

Q: How often and how long should I use ice packs?

A: In the first few weeks, you may use ice packs once every 2 hours for 15-20 minutes at a time as needed for pain and swelling.

Q: When can I drive?

A: You can drive approximately 1-3 day after surgery, on average. The criteria for driving is as follows:

1. You are no longer on narcotic pain medications.
2. You are able to hold and steer the wheel in comfort, as well as 'cut' the wheel without pain or weakness in unexpected situations.

Q: When can I go back to work?

A: Most people will be able to return to light duty within 1-2 days, and progress to heavier duty in the following weeks. Your therapist and you physician will be able to help you make this decision.