



**TUAN A. TRAN M.D., M.B.A, F.A.C.S.**

**Diplomate American Board of Plastic Surgery, Diplomate American Board of Surgery**

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*General Surgery, Reconstructive Surgery, Aesthetic Surgery, Plastic and Hand Surgery*

## **Thumb Ulnar Collateral Ligament Tear Post-Operative Instructions**

### **After Surgery**

- When you leave the operating room, you will be placed in a dressing with a splint or a cast for 6 weeks.
- You should still be able to move your fingers; however, your wrist and thumb will be immobilized.
- You can bend at the elbow and move your fingers while in the cast or splint.
- Make sure to keep your post-surgical dressing in place until you see Dr. Tran at your follow up visit.
- Note that the anesthetic used during the procedure may leave some or all of the fingers and your hand numb for many hours. This numbness usually wears off by the following morning, but it may last a little longer.
- This varies greatly from patient to patient, and may also be affected by your age.
- When you feel the first signs of your anesthetic wearing off, you may want to start taking your pain medication to help you feel more comfortable.

### **Dressing**

- You will have a soft dressing over your incision and then a hard splint or a brace protecting your wrist and hand after surgery.
- Avoid getting your splint or brace wet.
- This protective splint/brace will be removed at your first post-operative visit with Dr. Tran.

### **Shower and Bathing**

- You may begin to shower or bathe as soon as you like, however, if you are still in your protective splint or brace after surgery, please do not get this wet.
- You may place a bag over your dressing or get in the bathtub instead of shower to help prevent your splint/brace from getting wet.
- After we have removed your hard splint/brace and your original dressings over your incision at your first post-operative visit, you may bathe normally and get your incision wet in the shower.
- Do not submerge the incision underwater for an extended period of time, such as in a pool or hot-tub. Dry your incision well after it is cleaned.

### **Stitches**

If you have stitches in your skin that need to be removed, we will remove those in the office approximately 10-14 days after your surgery.

### **Pain Management**

- Do not drive while taking narcotic medications or those that may sedate you.



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- Take your pain medication as prescribed by Dr. Tran.
- You may take Advil or Aleve in moderate amounts if it is more suitable for you.
- If you experience itching due to your pain medicine, you may take Claritin or Benadryl to help with the symptoms.
- Remember to take your pain medication with food to diminish the potential for nausea.

## **Swelling**

Swelling is quite common following these procedures. Follow these recommendations to minimize swelling:

- Keep the hand elevated above the level of your heart.
- Move the fingers to open and close into a tight fist.
- Taking ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) will help with swelling (note: do NOT take acetaminophen/ Tylenol in addition to your narcotic pain medication because the narcotic pain medication also has Tylenol in it. You may take 1 or the other, but not both).

## **Activity Level**

### ***Driving***

You may begin driving again when you are NO longer taking any of the narcotic pain medications and can hold the steering wheel with both of your hands comfortably.

### ***Work***

- Those with jobs that are more sedentary and do not require heavy loads on the hands are often able to start returning to their duties sooner rather than later, however fine motor skills such as typing and writing may be difficult to perform.
- Jobs that involve extensive heavy lifting and strain on the hands may take more time to be able to return to work functions more normally. This is something quite unique to every patient's situation and can be discussed more specifically with Dr. Tran at your office visit.

## **Follow-up Appointment**

At your pre-operative appointment, our office staff will schedule your post-operative appointment with Dr. Tran about 10-14 days after surgery.

## **Possible Problems/Emergency**

If you develop any symptoms such as fevers with temperature greater than 101.5 F, chills, persistent nausea and vomiting, inability to urinate, persistent numbness/tingling of fingers, or increasing pain not controlled with medications,, please contact our office at 714-839-8000 between the hours of 9AM-6PM on Monday-Thursday and 9AM-1PM on Friday; or you may reach us at 714-860-3588 after hours. If you are unable to reach your surgeon or a member of his staff, go to the Emergency Room closest to you.

### **References:**

Chippewa Valley. (2020). *Scaphoid fracture: Post-surgical faq's*. Retrieved from <https://www.cvosm.com/pdf/scaphoid-fracture-faqs.pdf>