

Lamont J. Cardon, MD
Diplomat, American Board of Orthopaedic Surgery
Certificate of Added Qualifications, Hand Surgery

Basal joint Arthroplasty Post-Op Instructions

1. To set up prior to surgery:

Please set up your first two hand therapy appointments for:

- 1 - Orthoplast long splint fabrication preferably a couple of hours after your first post-op appt with Dr. Cardon.
- 2 - Orthoplast short splint fabrication about 6 weeks after the surgery, at which point therapy for range of motion will begin. *These instructions are printed on the hand therapy referral given to you at your pre-op appt.*

2. Immediately after the operation:

- You will be placed in a bulky plaster splint incorporating your thumb and wrist that needs to be kept clean and dry until you are seen for your first post-op appt. It is encouraged that you use your fingers for light activities and keep them loose.
- Expect bruising and swelling to occur in the fingers down to the forearm. Elevate the arm above the heart to reduce swelling and pain as much as possible for the first 3-5 days. You may place a couple of pillows underneath your arm/hand while sitting or laying down. Keep in mind bruising will take 14-21 days to resolve and six months for ALL swelling to subside. See below for information on pain control.
- It is common to experience *numbness* and *tingling* in the surgical area due to the long acting numbing medicine (Marcaine®) that is usually injected at the end of the operation to help with post-operative pain. This can last from several hours to 2 days after the operation.

3. At your 1st post-op appointment (12-15 days after surgery):

- The splint will be removed, your thumb and hand examined, and sutures may need to be removed. You will then go directly to therapy to have a new orthoplast splint fabricated. Or if therapy isn't scheduled the same day, a temporary fiberglass splint will be fabricated in the office.

Rehabilitation protocol:

Phase 1 (0-6 weeks)	Phase 2 (6-12 weeks)	Phase 3 (12 weeks and beyond)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• After the surgical splint is removed, your hand therapist will fabricate a removable forearm-to-thumb splint to be worn full-time except for bathing for the 1st 6 weeks post-op. You only need one therapy appt for the splint fabrication.• It is ok to remove splint for bathing, but please wear at all other times.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your hand therapist will fabricate a shorter thumb splint to be worn at all times except bathing and during exercises• You should schedule therapy 1-2x/week for range of motion (stretching) exercises. The goal at this time is to loosen up the thumb, but not start strengthening yet. We are still allowing the thumb to heal and become more stable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You may discontinue the splint.• Hand therapy will start strengthening exercises in addition to stretching.• You may gradually return to normal activities without restrictions

(over)

Pain control:

- Place an ice pack or a plastic bag with ice over the splint as needed to reduce the pain. You may do this as much or as little as desired. Many patients find this very effective in reducing pain.
- Most patients are given prescription of Norco® (hydrocodone), Percocet® (oxycodone) **or** Tylenol® #3 (codeine). One or two tablets can be taken as often as every 4 hours if needed. Anti-inflammatory medicines such as Ibuprofen (Motrin®, Advil®) or Naproxen (Naprosyn®, Aleve®) are often sufficient in controlling pain after the first couple of days. However, if you experience severe pain, you may take Norco® **or** Percocet® **or** Tylenol® #3 **AND** ibuprofen concurrently in the following alternating manner:

Take Norco®/ Percocet®/ Tylenol® #3 every 4 hours followed by 400mg Ibuprofen 2 hours later. Below is a sample schedule for taking these medicines:	
8 AM	Norco® (hydrocodone), Tylenol® #3 or Percocet®
10 AM	Ibuprofen 400mg (2 pills)
2 PM	Norco® (hydrocodone), Tylenol® #3 or Percocet®
4 PM	Ibuprofen 400mg (2 pills)

Warning: Take your medications with a meal or snack if possible. All NSAID medicines have risks of stomach irritation, bleeding or ulcers. NSAIDs should not be taken if you have history of stomach ulcers, bleeding disorders or if you are on a blood-thinner. Codeine, Norco® and Percocet® can occasionally cause nausea, vomiting and/or constipation. Do not take over-the-counter Tylenol when taking Vicodin®, Percocet® and Tylenol® #3 as these already contain acetaminophen. These medications can cause drowsiness and taking appropriate precautions is advised. Avoid drinking alcohol when taking these medications.

Driving:

- You may return to driving as soon as you feel safe, comfortable and completely in control of your car. However, do not drive if you are taking narcotics or under the influence in any way.

Contact Dr. Cardon at (510) 540-6800 if:

- You have severe pain upon stretching your fingers or severe/extreme pain and tightness in your forearm muscles when making a gentle fist and straightening the fingers. Some pain at the surgical site is normal.
- There is severe swelling above or below the splint. It is normal for surgery to cause swelling, especially in the fingers. However, if the swelling is excessive and appears to be restricting your circulation, you should contact Dr. Cardon.
- There is pus or foul odor from the dressing/splint. Or if you think that you are developing an infection.
- You develop a fever greater than 101°F for a couple of hours or more anytime after your surgery.

If you are unable to reach Dr. Cardon, you may need to go to the Emergency Room if your symptoms persist