Postoperative Care Instructions

Hand & Wrist Surgery — Day Surgery / Overnight Stay

Patient Information Sheet

Dr. Jarred Hogan

Orthopaedic Surgeon

Foot & Ankle | Orthopaedic Trauma

Please read this handout before you leave hospital and keep it at home for reference.

1. Rest and Elevation (First 3–5 Days)

- Keep your operated hand and arm elevated above heart level as much as possible for the first few days — use your sling by day and prop the arm on pillows at rest.
- Limit use of the hand to light, essential tasks only. The more you rest and elevate it early on, the less swelling and pain you will have.
- Ice packs (wrapped, never directly on skin) for 20 minutes at a time can help with swelling and discomfort in the first 2–3 days.

2. Wound, Dressing, and Splint/Cast Care

- Leave the original dressing, splint, or cast intact and dry until your follow-up appointment, unless given specific instructions otherwise.
- A small amount of blood staining on the dressing in the first 24–48 hours is normal.
- Do not shower or bathe with the dressing, splint, or cast exposed to water unless given a waterproof cover or specific instruction to do so.
- Do not apply creams, powders, or ointments to the wound, and do not insert anything into a cast or splint to relieve itching.

3. Pain Relief

- Take your prescribed pain medication regularly for the first few days, rather than waiting until pain becomes severe — this is more effective.
- Pain and swelling are usually worst on days 2–3 and gradually settle after that.
- If your pain is not controlled by the medication provided, or is steadily getting worse rather than better, contact the rooms.

4. Splint, Cast, and Use of the Hand

- Follow the finger and joint movement instructions given at discharge — these vary depending on your surgery.
- Gently move any fingers free of the splint or cast regularly, to keep them supple, unless told otherwise.
- Avoid gripping, lifting, or weight-bearing through the operated hand until you are told it is safe to do so.
- Driving is not permitted until discussed individually with Dr. Hogan — this depends on your surgery and safe control of the vehicle.

5. If You Are Concerned

- For urgent concerns (chest pain, shortness of breath, a very tight or painful cast), go to your nearest Emergency Department or call 000.
- For wound or pain concerns that are not an emergency, contact the rooms during business hours.
- If in doubt, it is always reasonable to be seen and checked — do not wait until your booked follow-up if something feels wrong.

6. General Advice

- Keep the hand and arm elevated whenever sitting or lying down, not just at night.
- Avoid smoking, as it slows wound and bone healing.
- Keep the sling on as instructed, removing it only for exercises or activities you have been told are safe.
- Avoid carrying bags, shopping, or children on the operated side until reviewed.

7. Follow-Up

- Your first postoperative review is usually 10–14 days after surgery, in the rooms. This has been arranged for you.

Seek urgent medical attention if you notice:

- Bleeding that soaks through the dressing and does not stop with elevation and a firm additional bandage.
- Increasing redness, warmth, swelling, or pus from the wound, especially with fever.
- Fingers becoming increasingly swollen, tight, pale, blue, or cold.
- Numbness, tingling, or loss of movement in the fingers that does not settle.
- Severe or rapidly worsening pain, especially pain that feels out of proportion or is not relieved by your prescribed medication.
- A cast or splint that feels too tight, or that has become cracked, soft, or wet.

Dr Jarred Hogan | admin@drjarredhogan.com.au | drjarredhogan.com.au