

WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER CLAVICLE SURGERY

Dr. Erik Dorf

Clavicle surgery is common to my practice and I have found the results to be consistent and reliable. Keep in mind that every person responds differently to surgery and treatment, and your recovery may vary from the below outline. Typical factors which influence the recovery process include:

- Your age and health.
- The severity of your fracture/nature of your injury
- The length of time between the injury and the surgery
- Your compliance with prescribed treatment and therapy



1. **SURGERY DAY:** I will give you a copy of the x-ray of your repaired clavicle. You will have a soft dressing over the incision and be placed in a sling that you will wear for the first month after surgery. Most patients have an area of numbness just below the incision, caused by small nerve branches that may be cut during surgery. This is not bothersome to most patients, and the area of numbness decreases over time.
2. **FIRST 48 HOURS AFTER SURGERY:** You should **wiggle your fingers** as much as possible. Repeatedly making a gentle fist can help minimize swelling in the hand. Ice over your bandage can also be used to reduce inflammation. I discourage the use of ibuprofen for the first two weeks after surgery.
3. **FIRST TWO WEEKS:** You may remove bandages and shower 5 days after surgery. After showering, cover the incision with a band-aid and reapply the sling. You should continue moving the wrist and fingers in the sling. You should also remove the sling to straighten the elbow several times per day. No lifting.
4. **AT YOUR TWO WEEK POST OP OFFICE VISIT:** We will check your incision for healing. You will have dissolvable stitches that do not need to be removed. We will not get x-rays at your first visit. Again **no lifting**.
5. **ONE MONTH AFTER SURGERY:** We will get x-rays at this time to monitor healing. You may discontinue the sling. You will be able to use the arm for normal daily activities, but no heavy lifting.
6. **EIGHT AND TWELVE WEEKS AFTER SURGERY:** We will see you back in our clinic for a repeat exam at 8 weeks and 12 weeks. We will repeat x-rays and gradually increase your activity.
7. **THERAPY:** If at anytime during this treatment course it appears you will require **therapy** to help decrease swelling, or improve range of motion you will be provided with a prescription for therapy. Approximately half of our patients require some sort of therapy.
8. **HOW LONG TO GET BETTER?** Most people are **mostly** better by 12 weeks after surgery. No one is completely better at this time, but you can typically return to most of your normal activities.
9. **HOW LONG FOR FULL RECOVERY?** It usually takes people **six months to a year** before they can expect full improvement after having surgery to fix a clavicle. You will likely continue to improve for up to two years.

Should you have any questions, please call any of our offices at the following numbers:

Edwards (970) 569-3240

Frisco (970) 668-3633

Vail (970) 476-7220