

WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER SURGERY FOR AN ELBOW FRACTURE

Dr. Erik Dorf

This type of surgery is very 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 injury/nature of your injury
- The length of time between the injury and the surgery
- Your compliance with prescribed treatment and therapy



1. **SURGERY DAY:** Following your surgery you will have a splint and ace wrap on your arm, from above your elbow to below your wrist. You will be provided with a sling to help support the arm in the splint. You may remove the sling as desired.
2. **FIRST 48 HOURS AFTER SURGERY:** You should ice and elevate the arm as much as possible. It will be difficult to feel the ice through the splint, but should still ice regularly. You can also ice your hand/fingers. Wiggle fingers regularly to help decrease swelling.
3. **FIRST TWO WEEKS:** Pain or swelling in the arm is normal. This can be lessened by the use of an ice pack, by elevating your hand above the level of your heart, and by the use of your pain medication. **You must leave the splint/dressing clean, dry and intact until your first follow-up visit.** Bathing is okay with the arm protected in a waterproof cover, such as a kitchen garbage bag and tape. We discourage the use of ibuprophen during the first two weeks.
4. **AT YOUR TWO WEEK POST OP OFFICE VISIT:** We will remove your splint and dressings and check the incision. You will be fitted for a hinged elbow brace at this visit, which will allow you to begin range of motion. We will instruct you about specific limitations in the brace, and how to slowly increase range of motion over the following several weeks. We will start you on gentle therapy at this time.
5. **4-6 WEEKS AFTER SURGERY:** You will return to the office and we will check your elbow range of motion. X-rays will be obtained at this visit to check healing progress. Your therapy will be progressed. You will be able to discontinue the brace.
6. **THREE MONTHS AFTER SURGERY:** You may begin gentle strengthening exercises in physical therapy.
7. **HOW LONG TO GET BETTER?** Most people are **mostly** better by 6 months and will be progressing with activity as tolerated. It may take up to a year for you to be fully improved.

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