

**Angela Santini, M.D.**  
**Board Certified Orthopaedic Surgeon**  
**Specialty in Spine**  
**Phone: 703-858-5454**

## **Post-Operative Instructions for Trigger Finger Release**

### **What to do:**

- Keep dressing clean and dry for 2-3 days following surgery. In most cases the dressing can then be removed and the area washed lightly with soap and water; do not soak for long periods of time.
- Following removal of the dressing, the area should be kept clean. A bandage may be reapplied if desired.
- The operated hand should be elevated above the level of the heart to decrease swelling and discomfort. This is usually the most helpful for the first week after surgery.
- Ice can be applied for 2-3 days following surgery. Avoid direct contact of the ice with skin, as this can result in cold-related skin damage.
- Avoid aspirin-containing products or anti-inflammatory medications (i.e. Motrin, Aleve, etc.) for 2-3 days after surgery, as these may increase the risk of bleeding immediately after surgery. Tylenol is safe immediately after surgery and may be alternated with (or used to replace) prescribed pain medication.
- It is not generally necessary, in the immediate post-operative period, to apply any ointments or topical compounds to the incision; doing so can inhibit normal healing.
- It is usually a good idea to avoid strenuous activity or exercise for the first 7-10 days after surgery. Heavy lifting with the affected hand should be avoided until the incision is well-healed.
- Range of motion exercises (moving the finger through the full range of normal motion) and using the hand/fingers for light activities are helpful in the avoidance of finger stiffness. This should be done throughout the day and is especially important for the first 2-4 weeks following surgery. Hand therapy is usually not required, but it is offered on an individual basis, as needed.
- Driving should be avoided if you are taking narcotic pain medications or if there is still significant pain from the surgery. Driving while these conditions are present could result in an unsafe driving situation.

### **What to look for/Troubleshooting:**

- Signs of infections: increasing redness, pain, warmth, or swelling at the surgical site. Additionally, fevers and chills can be signs of infection. Normal surgical pain and swelling should generally begin to decrease 2-3 days after surgery. If you suspect infection at the surgical site, contact the office as soon as possible to determine the appropriate treatment course.
- Signs of bleeding: sudden increased swelling/mass-effect at the surgical site, drainage of blood from the wound, or severe bruising around the surgical site. Drainage of a small or moderate amount of blood-tinged fluid following surgery is not uncommon and is usually not indicative of active bleeding. If there appears to be active bleeding, direct pressure on the site can be helpful. If you suspect significant bleeding following surgery, contact the office immediately to determine appropriate treatment.
- Wound healing problems can manifest as separation of the wound edges at the surgical site. This can be caused by a variety of factors and is usually a problem that can be managed by dressing changes and wound care. Keep the area clean and place a gauze dressing. Contact the office to discuss the need for further evaluation or treatment options.
- Problems moving the finger through the full range of motion or significant finger stiffness can occasionally develop following trigger finger surgery. If the problem is not improved by finger range of motion exercises and gentle stretching, initiation of formal hand therapy may be beneficial. Contact our office to further discuss.