

University of Virginia Plastic Surgery  
Post-Operative Instructions For Brachioplasty (Upper Arm Lift)

The following instructions are general guidelines to promote a safe and uneventful recovery from your surgery.

**Activities:**

- You should walk around your home or hotel the day of the procedure and the following days.
- You should avoid overhead activities with both arms for the first week after your surgery.
- Avoid aerobic exercise, vigorous activity, weight lifting and contact sports for 4 to 6 weeks after your procedure.
- You should be able to return to work in 5-10 days depending on how physically demanding your job is.
- Do not lift over 5-10 lbs for the first 10 days after your surgery (think gallon of milk or less)

**Bathing and Incision Care:**

- You may shower 48 hours after your procedure. Before you shower remove ace wraps, outer dressings but not the surgical tapes directly on your skin.
- Do not bathe in a tub until after your drain sites are healed. (**if drains are used**)
- Your sutures will dissolve.
- Wear your arm support ace wraps for one week or as directed by your surgeon.
- After one month you may begin using Vitamin E lotion to massage your scars or your doctor may prescribe Silagen with SPF if he feels it is indicated.
- Avoid sun exposure to your scars for at least six months.
- Sunlight can permanently affect the skin's pigmentation, causing the scar to turn dark.
- Wear sunblock with SPF 30 or higher if you know you will be unable to avoid the sun.

**Pain/ Medications:**

- You will feel discomfort and pain for several days following your surgery.
- This can be controlled with pain medication prescribed by your plastic surgeon.
- Do not take Aspirin, Ibuprofen, Motrin or Aleve for the week before and the first 10 days after surgery.
- You **MAY** have drains after your procedure.
- Drains are typically removed within one week.
  - Drain Care:
    - 1) Clean drain holes daily and apply bacitracin ointment.
    - 2) Keep drain pinned to binder to prevent pulling on them.
    - 3) Your doctor will typically remove the drain when the fluid collection is less than 30 mL over 24 hours
  - Prescription pain medication may be constipating. To help prevent constipation increase your intake of fluids and fibers. You may also take stool softeners as needed.

**General Information:**

- Numbness involving the upper arm and sometimes lower arm region is not uncommon and should resolve in 2-6 months.
- Mild to moderate swelling of both arms and hands is also common after this procedure. For the first 3-5 days after the procedure the swelling responds significantly to elevating the hands and arms above your heart as much as possible.

**Postoperative Appointment Information:**

- If your first postoperative appointment was not made at the time of your preoperative appointment University of Virginia Plastic Surgery would typically like to see you back for your first postoperative visit one to two weeks after your surgery. This date will be given to you before your discharge from the recovery room. If an appointment is not made at your preoperative appointment or in the recovery room, please call the office the day after your surgery to schedule that appointment.

**Notify your physician or After Hours Advice for any of the following:**

- Any signs of infection; fever (greater than 101° F), significant redness around incisions or on the area treated.
- Surgical area that is hot to the touch.
- One area or one arm or hand becomes significantly larger, more swollen or significantly more painful than other areas.

For life threatening issues or concerns dial 911.