



PLASTIC SURGERY AUSTIN  
Sanjay K. Sharma, M.D., F.A.C.S.

### What To Expect After Your Thumb CMC Arthroplasty

Thank you for choosing our practice for the care of your thumb arthritis. We strive to make this experience as easy and comfortable for you as possible. Please consider the following points as you prepare for and recover from your surgery.

1. Your hand will be in a splint when you wake up from surgery. It is very important that you do not remove this splint. The occupational therapist will remove the splint at your first appointment approximately 2-weeks post-op.
2. Please keep the post-op splint clean and dry. You may cover it with a plastic bag when you shower.
3. Keep your hand elevated above the level of your heart. It is best to be in the “question-asking position”, with your forearm vertical, and your elbow at the level of your shoulder. The easiest way to achieve this is to use the foam pillow you were sent home with. However, be sure to remove the pillow periodically and move your shoulder and elbow through their full range of motion to prevent stiffness.
4. Because infection is extremely rare, Dr. Sharma does not routinely prescribe an antibiotic following outpatient hand procedures. Signs of infection include but are not limited to: fever or chills, worsening pain or swelling, redness spreading past the incision site, new drainage from the incision site. If you fear you may have an infection, please call the office at 512-324-8320. If it's after business hours, you can page the doctor on call at MedLink (512-323-5465).
5. A prescription for Norco (acetaminophen with hydrocodone) or Percocet (acetaminophen with oxycodone) may be prescribed for you. You may or may not choose to take this, as some patients feel plain acetaminophen (Tylenol) and/or ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin) are enough. Please remember Norco and Percocet contain acetaminophen (as do many over-the-counter medicines, such as cold medicine) so DO NOT take additional acetaminophen if you are still taking the narcotic pain medication. It is safe to take the narcotics and ibuprofen concurrently in an alternating fashion to provide better pain relief. Also, please remember that it is *dangerous and illegal* to drive or operate heavy machinery while taking narcotic pain medication.
6. In most cases, you will see your occupational therapist 2-weeks after your surgery. Your therapist will remove your postoperative splint and make a new splint for you. Sutures will be removed at the 2-week mark. You will begin gentle range of motion exercises but no heavy lifting, gripping, or pinching is yet allowed in order to allow optimal healing.

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7. You will have your first post-op appointment with Dr. Sharma at 4-weeks. Chances are, your splint can then be cut down to “hand based” to allow more wrist range of motion. You will stay in your splint in some fashion for approximately 3 months.
8. Recovery from thumb arthritis surgery is extensive and lengthy. Please be patient with yourself, your body, and the process. It can be up to 6 months before your hand feels fully recovered.
9. If you have any needs, questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to call Dr. Sharma’s office at 512-324-8320!

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