Sling Use
Following Injury or Surgery to the Shoulder

A sling is used after an injury or because you had surgery. Your shoulder may take up to 6 weeks to heal. The sling fits well if:

- Your elbow rests in the bottom of the corner pocket.
- Only your fingers show at the opening. Your thumb should point up. Your wrist should fit inside and be supported by the sling.
- Your arm is fairly level with your hand and slightly higher than your elbow.

A wrap or elastic bandage that goes around your chest over your injured arm can be used to keep you from lifting your injured arm.

HOME CARE

- **Do not** use your shoulder until directed by your doctor.
- Keep all of your doctor visits.
- Put ice on the injured area.
  - Put ice in a plastic bag.
  - Place a towel between your skin and the bag.
  - Leave the ice on for 15 to 20 minutes at a time, 4 times a day.
- You may need to pad the elbow.
- Keep your arm on your chest when lying down.
- If a plaster splint was applied, wear the splint until you go see the doctor again. Rest it on a pillow the first 24 hours. **Do not** get it wet. You may take it off to shower or bathe unless directed otherwise by your doctor.
- You may have been given an elastic bandage to use with the plaster splint or alone. Adjust or reapply the bandage to make it comfortable. The splint is too tight if:
  - You lose feeling (*numbness*) or have tingling.
  - Your hand becomes cold and blue.
- Only take medicine as directed by your doctor.
- Exercise your shoulder as directed by your doctor. Stop exercising if you have pain.
- Talk to you doctor if your neck hurts from supporting the sling.

GET HELP RIGHT AWAY IF:

- You have an increase in bruising, puffiness (*swelling*), or pain.
- You notice a blue color or coldness in your fingers.
- The pain is not helped by medicine
- Any of your problems are getting worse.

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