Sling Use, Shoulder, After Stroke (CVA)

Shoulder pain is very common in a paralyzed shoulder following a stroke (Cerebral Vascular Accident or CVA). A large number of patients develop a shoulder that is constantly falling out of place (*dislocating*). This is because following a stroke, the muscles that used to keep the shoulder in joint are no longer strong enough to hold the shoulder in place. In this case, sometimes a sling may offer enough support to help with some of the pain in that shoulder. Often times if your shoulder has some strength remaining and your strength can be increased, you may be able to do away with the sling.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- During times when you shoulder is very sore you may use ice on the shoulder area for 15 to 20 minutes four times per day while awake. Put the ice in a plastic bag and place a towel between the bag of ice and your skin. Do not put the ice pack directly on your skin. Do this only if it seems to help the discomfort. It is not necessary if it does not give relief.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver.
- Wear your sling as directed by your caregiver. You may remove your sling for bathing or showering unless instructed not to by your caregiver. Replace the sling when through bathing or showering.
- Do not use your shoulder until instructed to by your caregiver.
- If you have been prescribed physical therapy, keep appointments as directed.You may be given physical therapy exercises to do at home; doing them as instructed will help to strengthen your shoulder.
- If you still have some muscles working in the paralyzed or weakened shoulder and range of motion exercises are permitted by your caregiver, gently exercise them. Do not go over the limits suggested. If you have increased pain from doing gentle exercises, back off or stop the exercises until you see your caregiver again.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You have an increase in bruising, swelling or pain in your shoulder.
- Your pain is not relieved with medicine or your shoulder seems to be getting worse.

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