

Living with an Injured Hand

Suggestions to Make Recovery Easier

Here are some tips suggested to make your life easier after surgery or if in a cast. Preparation can make things easier.

Cooking and Eating

- Plastic plates and paper cups
- Coffee mugs with large handles that allow a full hand grip
- Stock the freezer with frozen dinners and things that are easy to open and pop into the microwave
- Have a few loaves of sliced bread on hand
- Buy milk and things in smaller easy-to-handle sizes
- Prune juice or other mild laxatives (i.e. Senecot) or stool softeners (i.e. Colace) can be helpful since constipation is common after surgery especially with narcotic medications

Dressing

- When possible avoid buttons, zippers, belts, and shoelaces
- Large T-shirts, baggy shorts or sweatpants and non-skid flip-flops or Velcro close sport shoes
- Panty hose - difficult to pull up, so plan on not wearing for a while
- Bras - try a Velcro closure or spandex

Showering/Bathing

- Use plastic cover for dressing/cast, big plastic storage baggies (from newspaper, bread etc) with large rubber band (#32, from office supply store)
- Commercially available water-tight protectors are available from surgical supply stores (check availability prior to surgery), or mail order ([Medicare](#) 1-888-379-2278 approximately \$25 including delivery). These come in sizes adult hand, adult short arm (below elbow) and long arm (above elbow). These may be best ordered prior to surgery if you know the correct size but used after the first dressing change so they are easier to apply. Use the plastic baggies immediately after surgery.
- Long handle back brush
- Soap - large bar, soap on a rope, or liquid soap
- Consider non-slip strips on floor
- Battery toothbrush especially if it is your dominant hand
- Have toilet paper in a convenient location

Bills

- Consider filling out checks prior to surgery
- Use typewriter or word processor (easier if dominant hand involved)
- Stamps in sheets or rolls
- Rubber stamps for return address and deposit
- IRS - sign tax return if appropriate

Driving

- We do not determine if you can drive
- You should not drive for 24 hours after anesthesia which includes any sedation
- You should not drive when taking narcotic medications or judgment impairing medications
- Some medication and driving, operating machinery or doing any activity that can injure yourself or anyone else do not mix (see <http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm107894.htm#products>). This is especially true for pain medication which includes narcotic medication (ie: codeine, Dilaudid, Percocet, oxycodone, Demoral vicodin etc.) and any judgment altering medications. Do not drive or do these other activities when taking these medications.
- We will tell you if we feel driving will injure your affected hand
- You must be able to safely control the vehicle before you can drive
- [Wearing a cast or splint can impair mobility](http://www.aaos.org/news/aaosnow/jan10/clinical5.asp) (<http://www.aaos.org/news/aaosnow/jan10/clinical5.asp>)
- You can check with your insurance company or the police if you have questions regarding driving with a splint or cast



- Occasionally a return-to-driving program or reevaluation by a driving school with dual controls can be helpful ([Spaulding Rehabilitation Network Pre-Driving evaluation](#))

Miscellaneous things to think about

- Mail, newspapers
- Pets - arrange for care if needed and feeding
- Housecleaning
- Laundry
- Cash
- Paper towels, Toilet paper, Kleenex
- Haircut
- Fingernails, toenails
- Reading material, videos
- Give yourself extra time to do things

