

Proper Elevation Techniques

Proper elevation techniques are needed to help decrease swelling and inflammation that may occur after an injury or surgery. It is important to elevate because **the less swelling you have, the less pain you will have, and the better you will heal!**

The hand should be higher than the elbow. Think of “water running downhill!” The swelling in the hand needs to run down into the arm and then into the rest of the body, away from the hand.

Many times you cannot see what is underneath your bandage, but it is important to keep an eye on any parts that are visible. If the visible parts begin to look larger than your other hand, you are starting to swell! You need to get your “**hand towards the sky**” and if the fingers are outside and free of the bandage, start moving them!

POST OPERATIVE ELEVATION

If you have had surgery and a supraclavicular block was your anesthetic, your arm may be numb for 8-36 hours, depending on the type of medication used. A block is great because no feeling = no pain! But, the downside from the block is that you also do not have control over your arm. When you are sent home from surgery, you will be placed in a sling. The sling is a temporary way to control your arm, but it does not elevate you properly! Use the sling on your way home and when you are up walking, until you have muscle control, otherwise you should be elevating!!! After surgery you will be sent home with a big stockinet (sock) over your dressing or cast. The sock will have a long end on it; this needs to be tied to something high above your chair or bed. This will provide proper elevation of your hand. You should add pillows under your upper arm to help rest your shoulder and protect your elbow.

IDEAS FOR STOCKINETTE ELEVATION

Some people will put an “S” hook at the end of the sock for easier hooking and unhooking.

- Hall tree
- Coat rack
- Table lamp
- Bed post
- Ladder back chair
- Ironing board
- Small step ladder
- IV pole (rent from a medical supply store)



You should periodically stretch your elbow out (if it isn't immobilized!) and also let your shoulder muscles relax by doing some pendulum exercises, rotating and stretching the shoulder upwards and outwards.

