

# What to do after a hand injury or surgery

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**K**eeping your hand elevated is the single most important step you can take in getting your hand working again. This pamphlet will show you the best ways to keep your hand elevated.

**T**he easiest way to remember where to put your hand to keep it elevated is to **KEEP YOUR HAND BETWEEN YOUR HEART AND THE SKY**. It doesn't matter whether you're standing, sitting, lying down or standing on your head, if you keep your hand between your heart and the sky, gravity will keep the swelling to a minimum.



**A**fter any injury to your hand (i.e., cuts, bruises, sprains, fractures or surgery), your hand will react by swelling. Swelling can lead to stiffness in your hand and fingers, and can delay the healing of any lacerations or incisions. In addition, swelling will increase the pain you feel and may cause a throbbing “Heartbeat in your finger” sensation. Keeping your hand elevated, at all times, is simple and **VERY IMPORTANT!**

**H**ow long after your injury or surgery should you keep your hand elevated? The first week after an injury or surgery is the most important time for elevation. During this period putting your hand down for even a few minutes will cancel out hours of elevation. Keep your hand elevated **AT ALL TIMES** during the first week. After the first week, the time spent elevating your hand will depend on how much swelling remains. Your doctor will discuss this with you at the appropriate time. However, when in doubt, **ELEVATE!**



**A** sling may be provided to you after your injury or surgery. Wearing the sling improperly can cause more problems than it's worth. When wearing your sling, your hand must be kept up by your shoulder. If you wear the sling so that your hand is down by your belly button, your hand is not between your heart and the sky and will become swollen. Wearing the sling is **NOT** mandatory. You may remove the sling at any time, but you **MUST** keep your hand elevated.





**W**hen standing, you may put your hand on top of your head, or up by your shoulder. Remember to always **ELEVATE!**



**W**hen sitting, place your elbow on a table or the arm of a chair. Always put a soft pad or pillow under your elbow to avoid putting pressure on your “funny bone” nerve.



**W**hen lying down, put a pillow on your chest and place your hand on top of the pillow.

**O**r build a stack of pillows at your side and place your hand on top.



**Y**ou can also use your sling to prop up your hand.

**U**se these methods or invent your own – but keep your hand between your heart and the sky at all times!

*During the first 24 hours after an injury or surgery,  
ice will help to keep swelling down,  
WHEN USED IN ADDITION TO ELEVATION.*