KEVIN M. ROTH, MD
ORTHOPAEDIC SPORTS MEDICINE

POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

Hip Arthroscopy

Labral Repair, Labral Reconstruction & Femoroacetabular Impingement (FAI) — post-operative instructions for the first two weeks after surgery.

At a glance

Dressing	Multi-layer dressing over the hip. Remove outer layers on day 2; the small white tape strips touching the skin stay on.
Weight bearing	50% of body weight on the operative leg for the first 2 weeks, with crutches.
External rotation	Do not turn the operative leg outward for the first 2 weeks.
DVT prophylaxis	Aspirin 81 mg twice daily while on crutches.
First post-op visit	5–10 days after surgery.

Diet

Begin with clear liquids — Jell-O, broth, Gatorade — along with light foods like crackers or toast. Once you tolerate these without nausea, gradually progress to your normal diet over the following day.

Wound care

You will leave the operating room with a multi-layer dressing over the hip. From the outside in: medipore paper tape, then white gauze pads, then a yellow ointment-coated mesh (Xeroform), and small white tape strips (Steri-Strips) directly on the skin. Keep this dressing clean and dry for the first **2 days**.

On day 2, remove the dressing in this order:

1. Peel off the medipore paper tape.
2. Remove and discard the white gauze pads and the yellow Xeroform mesh beneath them.
3. **Leave the small white tape strips (Steri-Strips) on your skin.** They will lift off on their own over the next 1–2 weeks. Do not pick at them.

Some blood staining on the gauze is normal. If the incisions are dry, place a Band-Aid over each. If small drainage continues, place a clean dry gauze pad daily until it stops; if drainage persists beyond a few days, call the office.

Once the incisions are completely dry for 24 hours, you may shower. Let water and soap run over the incisions; pat dry with a clean towel. Do not scrub. **Do not submerge under water — no baths, pools, hot tubs, or ocean** — until cleared at follow-up.

Understanding your pain

Some pain after surgery is normal and expected. Dr. Roth uses a 0–10 pain scale to guide medication use, where 0 is no pain and 10 is the worst pain imaginable. Pain in the 0–4 range is

normal after surgery and is generally well-managed by the scheduled non-opioid regimen below. If your pain rises above a 4, the breakthrough oxycodone is available. If pain feels uncontrolled, unrelenting, or is getting worse rather than better, call the office.

Multimodal pain regimen

Your post-operative pain plan is based on multiple recent randomized controlled trials in patients undergoing the same type of surgery you are having.[1–5] These studies show that a scheduled regimen of non-opioid medications provides equal or better pain control than opioids, with fewer side effects and equally high patient satisfaction. Take these medications on the schedule below, even if you feel comfortable — they work best when taken consistently. Take with food when possible to reduce stomach upset.

DAYS 1–5 · SCHEDULED NON-OPIOIDS

MEDICATION	MORNING	NOON	AFTERNOON	EVENING
Meloxicam 7.5 mg	1 tab	—	—	1 tab
Gabapentin 300 mg	1 tab	1 tab	1 tab	—
Methocarbamol 750 mg	1 tab	1 tab	1 tab	1 tab
Acetaminophen 1000 mg	1 tab	1 tab	1 tab	—

DAYS 6–7 · GABAPENTIN TAPER BEGINS

MEDICATION	MORNING	AFTERNOON	EVENING
Meloxicam 7.5 mg	1 tab	—	1 tab
Gabapentin 300 mg	1 tab	—	1 tab
Methocarbamol 750 mg	1 tab	1 tab	1 tab
Acetaminophen 1000 mg	1 tab	1 tab	1 tab

DAYS 8–9 · GABAPENTIN TAPER CONTINUES

MEDICATION	MORNING	AFTERNOON	EVENING
Meloxicam 7.5 mg	1 tab	—	1 tab
Gabapentin 300 mg	1 tab	—	—
Methocarbamol 750 mg	1 tab	1 tab	1 tab
Acetaminophen 1000 mg	1 tab	1 tab	1 tab

DAYS 10–14 · MAINTENANCE

MEDICATION	MORNING	AFTERNOON	EVENING
Meloxicam 7.5 mg	1 tab	—	1 tab
Methocarbamol 750 mg	1 tab	1 tab	1 tab
Acetaminophen 1000 mg	1 tab	1 tab	1 tab

BREAKTHROUGH OXYCODONE — 10 TABLETS PRESCRIBED

The scheduled regimen above is designed to keep your pain manageable without opioids, and many patients do not need any oxycodone at all. If your pain rises above a 4 despite the scheduled medications, you may take 1 tablet of oxycodone 5 mg. Take only as much as you need, for as short a time as possible.

DRIVING AND OPERATING MACHINERY

Three medications in this regimen — **gabapentin** (days 1–9), **methocarbamol** (days 1–14), and **oxycodone** if taken for breakthrough pain — can cause drowsiness, dizziness, or impaired coordination. While taking any of these, do not drive, operate heavy machinery, or make important financial, legal, or major life decisions. Plan to have someone else drive for at least the first week, and do not drive until you have stopped gabapentin, are off oxycodone, and feel the methocarbamol is no longer affecting your alertness.

Journavx (suzetrigine) — optional

Journavx is a non-opioid prescription medication FDA-approved in 2025 for moderate-to-severe acute pain after surgery.[6,7] It carries no risk of addiction, no sedation, and does not impair driving. Clinical trials show pain relief comparable to hydrocodone with acetaminophen. If you want to avoid breakthrough oxycodone entirely, ask the office and a prescription will be sent to your pharmacy.

Cost: Often not covered by insurance — approximately $15 per pill. **First dose:** 100 mg on an empty stomach (1 hour before or 2 hours after food). Then 50 mg every 12 hours — subsequent doses can be taken with or without food. No grapefruit during treatment.

DRUG INTERACTIONS — READ BEFORE REQUESTING

Do not take Journavx if you take: ketoconazole, itraconazole (Sporanox), voriconazole (Vfend), posaconazole (Noxafil), clarithromycin (Biaxin), ritonavir or cobicistat-containing HIV/HCV medications (Paxlovid, Norvir, Kaletra, Stribild, Genvoya, Symtuza, Evotaz, Prezcobix), nefazodone, carbamazepine (Tegretol), phenytoin (Dilantin), phenobarbital, rifampin, rifabutin, or St. John's wort.

Contact your prescribing physician before taking Journavx if you take: fluconazole (Diflucan), erythromycin, ciprofloxacin (Cipro), diltiazem (Cardizem, Tiazac), verapamil (Calan, Verelan), fluvoxamine (Luvox), or efavirenz (Sustiva) — a dose adjustment on your existing medication may be needed.

Hormonal contraception: If your contraceptive contains a progestin other than levonorgestrel or norethindrone, use a backup non-hormonal method during treatment and for 28 days after stopping.

Blood clot prevention

Hip arthroscopy carries a slightly higher blood clot risk than knee surgery due to the traction positioning used during the procedure. To reduce this risk, take one 81 mg aspirin ("baby aspirin") **twice daily** for as long as you are using crutches. Stop once you are walking comfortably without crutches.

DO NOT START ASPIRIN IF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING APPLY — CALL THE OFFICE FIRST

- Allergy to aspirin
- Active stomach ulcer or recent gastrointestinal bleeding

- Already taking a blood thinner (warfarin, Eliquis, Xarelto, Pradaxa, Plavix, etc.) or known bleeding disorder

If you already take aspirin daily for heart or vascular reasons, call the office to discuss the appropriate dose.

Activity and weight bearing

Use crutches to assist with walking. You may put **50% of your body weight** through the operative leg for the first 2 weeks. Do not hyperextend or hyperflex your hip — move only within a pain-free range of motion.

Avoid prolonged sitting with the leg below your waist or prolonged standing/walking for the first 7–10 days. You may return to sedentary work or school **3–4 days after surgery** if swelling and pain are tolerable and you are not taking opioids.

EXTERNAL ROTATION RESTRICTION — FIRST 2 WEEKS

Do not turn your operative leg outward (externally rotate your hip) for the first 2 weeks. This allows the hip capsule repair to heal. When sleeping or resting, try to keep your foot pointing straight up rather than falling outward to the side. If a CPM machine was prescribed, using it at night helps maintain this neutral position automatically.

Meloxicam — pain control and bone formation prevention

In addition to managing pain, the meloxicam in your regimen serves an important secondary purpose after hip arthroscopy: it reduces the risk of **heterotopic ossification** — abnormal bone formation in the soft tissues around the hip that can occur after this type of surgery. For this reason, it is important to take the full 14-day course even if your pain has already improved significantly. Do not stop the meloxicam early.

Ice and cold therapy

Cold therapy reduces pain and swelling and is one of the most effective non-medication tools you have. Begin icing as soon as you arrive home.

- **Bagged ice or gel packs:** 20 minutes at a time, no more than once per hour. Always keep a cloth between the ice and your skin. Do not exceed 20 minutes — frostbite is a real risk, especially after a nerve block.
- **Cold-therapy devices (Game Ready, Polar Care, Breg, etc.):** use for **20–30 minutes at a time, up to 4 times per day,** with a thin cloth between the pad and your skin — or follow the specific instructions for your device if different.

If you had a nerve block during surgery, the limb may be numb for 12–72 hours. Watch the clock carefully when icing during this period.

Exercises

Begin exercises 24 hours after surgery. Do them at least **3 times per day.** Try to perform 3 sets of 10 repetitions initially; you may increase to 15 repetitions if tolerated. Formal physical therapy starts after your first post-op visit. Do ankle pumps throughout the day to minimize the risk of blood clots.

STRAIGHT LEG RAISES ARE NOT PART OF THIS PROTOCOL

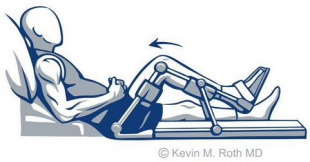
Unlike knee surgery protocols, straight leg raises are intentionally omitted after hip arthroscopy. The hip flexor tendon is under stress after this surgery, and loading it early significantly increases the risk of hip flexor tendonitis — one of the more common complications. Your physical therapist will introduce this exercise when the time is right.

Stationary bike

This is the single most important exercise for preventing hip stiffness. Start the day after surgery if possible — at home, at a gym, or at physical therapy. Remove the brace, sit upright (not in a racing position), set resistance to zero, and simply let the leg move with the pedals for 10–15 minutes. Do this daily.

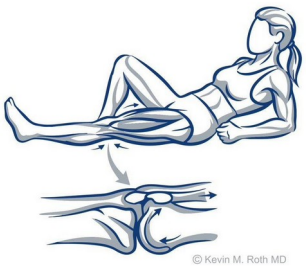
Motion machine (CPM) — if no bike available

If you do not have access to a stationary bike, Dr. Roth may prescribe a motion machine (CPM). Use it 4–6 hours per day. Start at 0–30° and advance 3–5° per day as tolerated, with a goal of 0–70° by 2 weeks. It can also be used at night to keep the hip in a neutral position and prevent the foot from rotating outward.



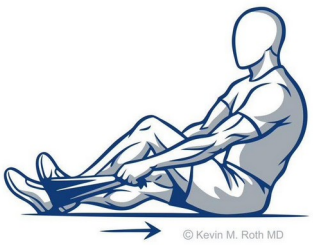
Quadriceps sets

Lie down or sit with your leg fully extended. Tighten the muscle on the front of your thigh to flatten the knee against the bed or floor. The kneecap should slide upward toward the thigh.



Heel slides

Sitting or lying down, gently slide your heel along the floor toward your thigh, bending the knee. Hold a few seconds, then slowly straighten. A towel around the foot can help.



Ankle pumps

Move your foot up and down like pressing a gas pedal — 20–30 repetitions, every few hours. This circulates blood through the leg and reduces blood clot risk.

No tobacco or nicotine

Do not use tobacco or nicotine products for at least 3 months after surgery — cigarettes, cigars, vapes, smokeless tobacco, dip, chew, or nicotine patches and gum. Nicotine significantly increases the risk of infection, wound healing problems, and failure of the repair. For help quitting, call **1-800-QUIT-NOW**.

BLOOD CLOT WARNING SIGNS

Hip arthroscopy carries a slightly higher risk of blood clots than other lower extremity procedures due to the positioning required during surgery. Know these warning signs:

Signs of a blood clot in the leg (DVT):

- Swelling in the calf or thigh — can occur on either the operative or non-operative side
- Pain or tenderness in the calf, especially behind the knee
- Redness, warmth, or bluish discoloration of the leg

Signs of a blood clot in the lung (pulmonary embolism — a medical emergency):

- Sudden shortness of breath
- Sharp chest pain, especially with deep breathing
- Rapid heart rate
- Unexplained cough, sometimes with blood-tinged mucus

If you have any DVT symptoms, call the office at **(650) 853-2943** or go to the nearest emergency room. **If you have any PE symptoms, call 911 immediately.**

When to call

Call the office at **(650) 853-2943** for any concern, day or night. This number reaches Dr. Roth or a covering physician after hours.

- Pain not controlled by the regimen above, or getting worse rather than better
- Numbness lasting more than 24 hours after surgery, or longer than expected from your nerve block
- Fever above 101 °F (a low-grade temperature is normal in the first few days)
- Increasing redness, warmth, or tenderness around the incisions
- Persistent or increasing drainage or bleeding from the incision
- Calf pain or swelling
- Color change in the operative limb
- Blistering of the skin

- Any other concern

GO TO THE NEAREST EMERGENCY ROOM IMMEDIATELY FOR

- Difficulty breathing
- Severe chest pain
- Loss of consciousness
- Pain that is completely uncontrollable

Follow-up

If you do not already have a follow-up appointment, call **(650) 853-2943** to schedule. Most follow-up visits are 5–10 days after surgery.

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5. Syed UAM, Aleem AW, Wowkanech C, et al. The effect of preoperative education on opioid consumption in patients undergoing arthroscopic rotator cuff repair: a prospective, randomized clinical trial. *J Shoulder Elbow Surg.* 2018;27(6):962–967.
6. Bertoch T, D'Aunno D, McCoun J, et al. Suzetrigine, a nonopioid NaV1.8 inhibitor for treatment of moderate-to-severe acute pain: two phase 3 randomized clinical trials. *Anesthesiology.* 2025;142(6):1085–1099.
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