Dr. Katzen’s Post-Op Arm Lift and Recovery

So, you are preparing for an arm lift or you have had the arm lift and wanted to know about the recovery after an arm lift.

ARM POSITION

FIRST WEEK

Dr. Katzen suggests to:

1) Keep your elbows straight. Keeping elbows straight will minimize swelling and pain.

2) Keep your hands above your heart. Maintaining your hands above your heart will decrease swelling and pain.

3) Keep your arms held slightly higher than 90 degrees in front of you (like Superman) or somewhat higher than 90 degrees out by the sides (like a bird).

4) Keep these arm positions during the day, as well as when you sleep at night.

5) In order to achieve these positions, you will need pillows. Depending on the pillow, you may need three or four pillows on each side. Please bring these pillows in the car to travel home after your arm lift surgery.

SECOND WEEK

As the arm swelling decreases, you will be able to increase your arm movements. With each day, you will have more and more range of motion. During the second week, you should be able to tolerate having your arms by your side for at least one to two hours. You can go on walks with your arms by your side. If you do have swelling, you are encouraged to keep your arms elevated. You should continue to elevate your arms while you sleep.

THIRD AND FOURTH WEEK

As your arm swelling decreases and your arm continues to heal, you should be able to keep your arms at your side for an unlimited period. You may have occasional swelling, which may require elevation for one to two hours. Unless you have continued swelling, you do not need to keep your arms elevated while you sleep.

FOURTH WEEK

You should be able to resume physical activity. You should be able to run without restrictions. You should be ready to start lifting objects weighing approximately 20 pounds. As time passes, you should be able to return to all of your previous activities.

ASSISTANCE

Due to the incapacity of your arms, you will need someone to help you for the first five to seven days. For the first week, you will need someone to help you to brush your teeth, eat, drink, brush your hair, wash your face, and take care of yourself in the bathroom.

DRESSINGS

You will have ACE bandages from your hands to your armpits. Unless specifically instructed by Dr. Katzen, do not change these dressings. The arm dressings are extremely important to minimize swelling and protect the arm incision from opening.

PAIN

Everyone experiences some pain after an arm lift. Most patients have some arm pain for the first several days. Pain pills will control your pain. For most patients, the pain is gone after the first week.

WHEN CAN I TOUCH MY FACE?

Since your arms are immobilized, you will not be able to touch your face for the first five to seven days. Therefore, you need help with drinking, eating, brushing your teeth, and scratching your nose.

WHEN CAN I WEAR THE ARM GARMENT?

The problem with the arm garments is that they can provide too much pressure, especially in the armpit. Pressure can cause wound breakdown. Also, the arm garment is very tight, and it can be difficult to don the arm garment without significant tension on the incision. Therefore, Dr. Katzen prefers to use ACE bandages until the arm incisions are well-healed. Typically, arm garments are placed in the second or third week after the arm lift surgery. Usually, pads are placed on top of the arm lift incision to further protect the incision from the garment.

HOW LONG WILL I WEAR THE ARM GARMENTS?

Dr. Katzen recommends you wear your arm garments for six weeks after an arm lift. If you continue to have arm swelling, you may have to wear your arm garments for longer than six weeks.

RECOVERY TIME

Recovery time after an arm lift is between two to three weeks.

WHEN CAN I GO BACK TO WORK AFTER AN ARM LIFT?

If you have a desk job, you should be able to return to work two weeks after your arm lift. If you have a physically demanding job which requires lifting, you should be able to return to work three to four weeks after your arm lift.

SWELLING

Seven to ten days after an arm lift, hand swelling is usually gone. To minimize swelling in the hands, open and close your hands every hour for the first five days after your arm lift. Swelling in the forearms is usually gone ten to fourteen days after an arm lift. Swelling in the upper arm is usually gone by about four to six weeks after an arm lift.

Take a look at this video of Dr. Katzen performing an arm lift procedure:

Following Dr. Katzen’s post-op directions will lead to a smoother recovery process.

Dr. Katzen has two offices conveniently located in Beverly Hills, California and Las Vegas, Nevada. If you have any other questions regarding arm lift surgery, post-op, or plastic surgery, please call Dr. Katzen's office today at (310) 859-7770.