

Elbow immobilizers after surgery (for use at home)



What are elbow immobilizers?

Elbow immobilizers, also called welcome sleeves, are used to help promote healing of a surgery site. They are often used in babies and small children.

How do I use elbow immobilizers at home?

Talk with your child's doctor or care team about specific care for your child. Some guidelines for using elbow immobilizers at home include:

- Monitor your child at all times while immobilizers are in use.
- Remove them at least every 2 hours.
- Remove them while you are watching or holding your child.
- Remove them when your child is sleeping.
- When they are removed, massage and exercise your child's elbows.
- Assess your child's arm and hand for skin changes or breakdown, such as breaks in the skin, swelling, redness or temperature changes (warmth or coolness).
- Your child may be clumsier, so watch for falls.
- Stop using the elbow immobilizers once your child no longer tries to bother their surgery site or as advised by your child's doctor.
- Call your child's doctor if you have questions or concerns.

How do I check the surgery site for CMS?

CMS stands for:

- **C**irculation (blood flow)
- **M**otor function (movement)
- **S**ensation (feeling)

Make sure the elbow immobilizer is secure but not too tight.

Blood needs to flow well to all body parts around the immobilizer.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Elbow immobilizers after surgery (home), continued

Check your child for these things while immobilizer is in use:

- Pain – ask your child if they have any pain while the immobilizer is in use.
- Finger movement (motor function) – have your child move or wiggle their fingers often.
- Sensation (feeling) – touch the area above and below the immobilizer several times each day.
- Swelling – check the area above and below the immobilizer several times each day.
- Blood flow (circulation) – press briefly on each of your child’s fingernails; when it turns white, let it go. The pink color should return in 2 to 3 seconds.
- Temperature (warmth or coolness) – check fingers for temperature often. If any of your child’s fingers are cold, remove the immobilizer and cover their fingers with a blanket or sock. Recheck in 20 minutes.

Call the doctor **right away** if your child's sensation, pain, swelling, blood flow or skin temperature does not improve after you remove, loosen or reapply your child's elbow immobilizer.

Also call if you have any questions or concerns about how your child looks or feels.

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child’s doctor or a member of your child’s healthcare team about specific care of your child.

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