Caring for your Child

Brachial Plexus Birth Palsy: Tendon Transfers

Your child has been scheduled for tendon transfers. The goal of this surgery is to improve your child’s ability to raise his arm over his head.

Information for day of surgery:

- Your child will be put to sleep with general anesthesia.
- The surgical incision(s) will be at the arm pit.
- The surgeon will move muscles located deep in the shoulder to the back of the shoulder. He will use stitches to keep the muscle in place. The stitches will dissolve. They do not need to be removed.
- Your child will have a cast around his arm and chest to protect the transferred muscle as it heals. The cast will stay on for 4 weeks after surgery.

Getting ready for surgery:

- **Clothing:** You may need larger clothing to fit over the cast. Bigger t-shirts and zip up or front opening clothing and sweatshirts are easiest to fit over the cast.
- **Car seat:** Most children are able to fit into their car seats with the cast. If your car seat has high or winged sides you may need a different seat.
- Your child will not receive therapy for 4 weeks while the cast is on unless ordered by your surgeon.

Cast care after surgery:

- If your child appears to be in pain, refer to your discharge instructions for information on pain medication.
- Your child will get used to his cast in a few days, but he may be frustrated at first. If your child is walking, watch him more closely until he gets used to balancing with the cast.
- Do not lift or move your child by the bar on the cast.
- Keep the cast clean and dry. Do not bathe your child in a tub. Just give sponge baths until the cast is removed.
Contact the orthopedics department at (215) 590-1527 if:

- Your child’s fingers appear swollen or blue/gray. Your child should be able to move all of his fingers. They should be pink and warm.
- The cast gets wet

**Occupational Therapy after surgery:**
- After the cast is removed, the muscles will need to learn how to work in their new location.
- Your child will need outpatient therapy about 1-2 times a week.
- You should choose a facility and schedule therapy appointments so that you are ready to start therapy soon after the cast is removed. Your surgeon will give you a prescription.
- Your child’s therapist will follow a therapy plan from your surgeon with new exercises and activities added each week.
  - The transferred muscle continues to heal for 8 weeks after surgery, it is important to follow the instructions from your child’s surgeon and therapist during this time so the arm can safely move and get stronger.
- We will teach you exercises to do with your child at home. It is important to do these every day in order to have the best results from surgery.

**For about 8 weeks after surgery, your child should not:**
- Participate in gym class
- Play on monkey bars or playground equipment
- Crawl through tunnels
- Play contact sports of any kind
- Do any rough or heavy activity that may hurt the fragile arm

We would be happy to write a letter explaining this to teachers, coaches, gym teachers, etc. If your child’s therapist or physician has any questions, please call or email us.