Your first follow-up visit should be in approximately 7-14 days. Call Dr. Wilson’s office at 503.375.3636 if you are unsure about your appointment or if you have questions about your operation.

Elevate the hand above the elbow, and from the elbow above the chest, for at least 48 hours. A marble should be able to roll downhill from your fingertips to your chest without ever traveling uphill. When walking or standing, the arm needs to be above your head, not resting on your chest. It takes 4 hours of elevation to decrease the welling that occurs with 1 minute of the hand being down too low. Resting the wrist or forearm on top of your head is a good way to keep it elevated when standing. If your elbow is below your collar bone (clavicle), then your hand is not elevated. Elevation will decrease pain, decrease complications, and increase motion after the operation. Elevation is the most important way to control both pain and swelling.

Swelling in the hand and fingers always occurs after an operation. The swelling can be quite impressive. Discoloration with black and blue fingers or forearm may occur. The most common cause is failure to elevate the hand adequately. There is no cast on the forearm or the hand. If the dressing feels too tight, the soft dressing may be partially cut or loosened, then rewrapped or taped.

Apply ice in a bag on the elbow crease or palm side of the wrist (or directly over the site of a minor operation such as a finger) to help with pain control. Do this during the first several days after the operation.

After having had your operation, no pain medication is capable of taking away all of the pain. However, taking the pills at regular intervals without missing doses will give you the best chance of controlling the pain. You may alternate different pain medications if directed by Dr. Wilson. Elevation and ice placed at the inside of the elbow or wrist will help reduce the pain.

Keep the dressing clean, absolutely try, and undisturbed at all times, unless you are directed to change the dressing. Most dressings will be changed at your first post-operative visit.
Finger exercises help reduce swelling if the arm is kept elevated. Although painful, you should try bending the fingers into the palm and straightening them as much as possible. This quickens your recovery time and results in less pain later. Do these exercises for five minutes every 1-2 hours. Move any joints that are not immobilized through as full a range of motion as possible, as often as possible.

IF you have any new numbness in your fingers, your fingertips turn from pink to white or blue, or if you see new bright red bleeding soaking through the dressing, call Dr. Wilson IMMEDIATELY. If you develop chest pain, shortness of breath, or other serious and acute symptoms, CALL 911. If any of your usual medical problems flare up after your operation, call Dr. Wilson.

If your anesthesia involved a breathing tube of any kind, you may be hoarse or have a sore throat.

Do not try to eat too much food too soon. This may result in nausea due to the narcotic pain medications and anesthesia.

Plan ahead for prescription refills. If you anticipate running out of medication, please call your pharmacy for a refill. You should allow 48 hours (or two business days) for processing and communication with your pharmacy. Please note that stronger types of pain medication cannot be refilled over the telephone—a new written prescription must be obtained from your surgeon. Calling your pharmacy early will allow sufficient time for you to obtain the prescription.