



Discharge Instructions for Total Knee Replacement

You have undergone knee replacement surgery. The knee joint forms where the thigh bone, shin bone, and knee cap meet. The Knee joint is supported by muscles and ligaments, and is lined with a cushioning called cartilage. Over time, cartilage wears away. This can make the knee feel stiff and painful. Your doctor replaced your painful joint with a knee prosthesis (artificial joint) to relieve the pain and restore movement. Here are some instructions for you to follow once you are at home.

Home care

- You are allowed to shower, but no baths until your incision has healed. Your dressing is water-proof and will protect your incision. Sit on a shower stool or chair when you shower to keep from falling.
- To relieve discomfort at night, get up and move around with your walker.
- Take your blood thinner medication as directed by your doctor.

Incision Care

- Check the skin surrounding your incision daily for redness, swelling, tenderness or drainage.
- Avoid infection by washing your hands often. If an infection occurs, it will need to be treated immediately. So call your doctor right away if you think you may have an infection.
- Avoid soaking your incision in water (no hot tubs, bath tubs, or swimming pools) until your doctor says it's okay.

Sitting and Sleeping

- Sit in chairs that have arm rests. The arms will make it easier for you to stand up and sit down.
- Don't sit for more than 30 - 45 minutes at one time.
- Nap if you are tired, but don't stay in bed all day.
- Sleep with a pillow under your ankle, not your knee. Be sure to change the position of your leg during the night.

Follow Up

- A follow up appointment will be made for you 10 - 14 days after your surgery.

Moving Safely

- The key to successful recovery is movement by walking and exercising your knee as directed by your doctor and physical therapist.
- Walk up and down stairs with support. Try one step at a time - lead with the good knee when going up the stairs and lead with the bad knee when going down the stairs. Use the railing if possible.
- Use a cane, crutches, a walker, or handrails until your balance, flexibility, and strength improve. And remember to ask for help from others when you need it.
- Don't drive until your doctor says it's okay. Most people can start driving about 6 weeks after surgery. Don't drive while you are taking narcotic pain medications.

Other Precautions

- Tell all your healthcare providers - including your dentist - about your artificial joint before any procedure. You will likely need to take antibiotics before dental work and other medical procedures to reduce the risk of infection.
- Arrange your household to keep items you need handy. Keep everything else out of the way. Remove items that may cause you to fall, such as throw rugs, and electrical cords.
- Use non-slip bath mats, grab bars, an elevated toilet seat, and a shower chair in your bathroom.
- Keep your hands free by using a backpack, fanny pack, apron or pockets to carry things.
- Prevent infection. Ask your doctor for instructions if you haven't already received them. Any infection will need to be treated immediately with antibiotics. Signs of infection are listed below.
- Maintain a healthy weight. Get help to lose any extra pounds. Added body weight puts stress on the knee.
- Take any medications you have been given after surgery. This may include blood thinning medications to prevent blood clots or antibiotics to prevent infection. Be sure to take ALL your antibiotics.

Pain Management

- In the hospital you were getting pain pills about every 2 hours. Now that you are going home it is time to start thinking about getting off of the pain pills.
- We cannot take away your pain; we do want to manage it so you can continue your daily activities of living and physical therapy.
- Start increasing the time between your pain pills. For example: if you were getting pain pills every 2 hours, then start taking pain pills every 3 hours, then every 4 hours etc...
- By 2 weeks after your surgery you should only be using prescribed pain pills prior to physical therapy and at night before you go to bed.
- You should not be using prescribed pain pills by 6 weeks after your surgery.
- Once you have stopped taking your blood thinners, Rivaroxaban, Lovenox, Arixtra or Aspirin, it is safe to start taking Ibuprofen. You can take ibuprofen during the day and use your prescribed pain pills at night and during therapy.

When to seek Medical Attention

Call 911 right away if you have:

- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- Any pain or tenderness in your calf

Otherwise call your doctor immediately if you have:

- Fever of 100.4 °F or higher, or shaking chills
- Stiffness or inability to move the knee
- Increased swelling in your leg
- Increased redness, tenderness, or swelling in or around the knee incision
- Drainage from the knee incision
- Increased knee pain