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ACL Reconstruction Postoperative Instructions

ACTIVITY

Rest the day of surgery. Elevate your leg on 2-3 pillows or rolled up towels placed under the **heel** so that the heel is elevated higher than your knee. This will help reduce swelling and achieve full extension of the knee. For the first 1-2 weeks after surgery, the **most important goal is to regain the ability to fully straighten the knee**. Too much walking will cause the knee to swell and hurt, which will prevent the knee from getting straight. Unless otherwise instructed, you may put as much weight on your leg as is comfortable. When walking, the brace must be worn and locked in full extension. Use the crutches as needed until your physical therapist instructs you otherwise. This may be anywhere from a few days to 1-2 weeks.

PHYSICAL THERAPY

PT is the most important part of your recovery. You must see a physical therapist at least 2 times a week beginning the week after your surgery. In addition, you will perform your exercises at home 4 times a day. These exercises will consist of gentle range of motion and strengthening as well as specific exercises to prevent your knee from becoming stiff. If you need help finding a therapist, please let our office know.

BANDAGE

You will have an ace wrap around your knee. Underneath will be waterproof bandages which should remain on until your first post operative office visit. If they inadvertently become wet or start to peel off, then remove and cover the incision/ sutures with Nexcare waterproof bandaids. Your sutures will be removed on your first office visit approximately 7-14 days post operatively.

SHOWERING

You must keep the incision dry to prevent an infection as it is healing. Use saranwrap over the bandages to ensure a watertight seal. Try to avoid the shower from hitting the incisions directly. Do not apply creams, ointment or lotions to your incisions while they are still healing (approximately 3 weeks).

MEDICATIONS

You will receive a prescription for pain medication prior to your discharge from the hospital. Take one tablet for mild to moderate pain and two tablets for more severe pain. Please make the hospital staff aware of any allergies you may have to avoid medical complications. You may also receive an anti-inflammatory medication to reduce swelling. This may be taken with your pain medication. If you find that you are constipated from the medications, please feel free to use an over the counter stool softener or laxitive.

COLD THERAPY UNIT/ ICE

Prevention of post-op swelling or inflammation is an important part of your recovery. Apply icepack/ gelpack/ frozen peas to the surgical site 20 minutes 4 to 6 times a day or use your cold therapy unit as directed in the instructions. Also, it is important to apply the ice/cold therapy 10-20 minutes after completing your physical therapy.

DRIVING

You may not drive while taking pain medication.

In addition, if it is your right knee that had surgery, you will not be able to drive for approximately 6 weeks after surgery or until the brace is removed.

NORMAL SENSATIONS AND FINDING AFTER SURGERY

- a. Pain
- b. Swelling and warmth up to 2 weeks
- c. Small amounts of bloody drainage for first few days
- d. Numbness around the incision area
- e. Bruising
- f. Low grade temperature less than 101.0 for up to a week after surgery.
- g. Small amount of redness to the area where the sutures insert in the skin

NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IMMEDIATELY IF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING SIGNS OR SYMPTOMS OCCUR

- a. Calf pain or ankle swelling in either knee
- b. Change is noted to your incision (i.e. increased redness or drainage)
- c. Temperature greater than 101.0
- d. Fever, chills, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
- e. Sutures become loose or fall out and incision becomes open
- f. Drainage becomes yellow, puss like or foul smelling
- g. Increased pain unrelieved by medication or measures mentioned above.

REMEMBER TO CALL OUR OFFICE TO SCHEDULE YOUR POST-OPERATIVE APPOINTMENT (APPROXIMATELY 7-14 DAYS FROM SURGERY)