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Post-Operative Instructions Following ACL Reconstruction

1. WHEN DO I COME IN FOR MY FIRST FOLLOW-UP VISIT?

If an appointment has not already been scheduled, please call the office the day following surgery to schedule an appointment for approximately one week after your surgery.

2. WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT AFTER SURGERY?

After surgery, it is normal to experience some discomfort. You should have received a prescription from the nursing staff at the hospital. Please fill the prescription and use the medication regularly as directed for the first twenty-four hours and then as needed after the first day. For minor discomfort, Tylenol may be used **instead** of the prescription medication.

If you are able to take NSAIDs (ie. Advil, Motrin, Aleve, Ibuprofen, etc.), you can take these **with** your prescribed pain medication.

A low-grade temperature (99-101 degrees F) is common. Please call the office if your temperature is consistently elevated over 101.5 degrees.

Try to keep the surgical leg elevated for the first two days when you are resting. Your knee should be elevated above your heart. This can best be done by placing pillows under your calf.

3. WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP REDUCE SWELLING AND DISCOMFORT?

Limiting your activities and resting with your knee elevated above your heart are the best methods of reducing swelling and discomfort. This will also help speed up your recovery. You may have a cool therapy device. If this is the case, the company's representative should have provided you with instructions on its proper use. If not, please call their office for assistance. If you cannot reach them, please call our office. Ice may also be used. This is equally effective and can be done by filling a plastic bag with ice cubes and placing it over your knee with a towel between the skin and the ice bag. Leave the ice in place for 15-30 minutes. This may be done every hour while awake.

With regard to your activity level, use common sense as your guide. Advance your daily activities as tolerated. No running, jumping or risky activities are permitted. Full weight bearing on your operative leg is permitted. Be careful while climbing and descending stairs. Painful activities are to be avoided. Initially, it is best to limit your activities to those that are necessary. This will help reduce your swelling and discomfort.

4. HOW LONG SHOULD I KEEP MY KNEE DRY AND WEAR THE BANDAGE?

The bandage should be kept dry and in place for 48 hours. For the first 48 hours, it is best to take baths with your knee hanging out of the tub so that the dressing may remain dry.

Forty-eight hours after surgery please remove and discard the bandages, leave the small white strips located over your incision in place. There may be some dried blood on the bandages and knee. This is normal. In addition, there will be several stitches. After you remove the bandage, continue to keep the incisions dry and covered with either gauze and a loosely fitting ace bandage or Band-Aids. Do not place any creams or lotions on the incisions.

It is best to keep the incision dry. If you would like to shower, you can cover the operative site with plastic wrap and tape. Following your shower, you may use a hairdryer to dry the operative site if it has gotten wet. It may be easier to take baths until the sutures are removed. However, do not immerse your knee in water (i.e. swimming, baths, or hot tubs) while the stitches are in place.

Be very careful when showering, it is normal for your leg to be very weak following the surgery. A stool placed in the shower so that you can sit, may be helpful.

5. HOW MANY DAYS SHOULD I USE MY CANE OR CRUTCHES?

Use your cane or crutches as needed. It is okay to put full weight on your leg. As each day passes, you may find that the cane or crutches are not needed. Feel free to walk without them as tolerated when you feel safe and are comfortable.

6. WHAT EFFECTS MIGHT I NOTICE FROM THE ANESTHESIA?

If you had general anesthesia, some fatigue and lethargy may be noticeable for a day or two. Occasionally, nausea may occur. Eating light foods will help. Resume your regular diet as the nausea resolves.

If you had a Block as well, soreness in the area of injection is common. Ice to this area is helpful in reducing discomfort. Apply it for 15 - 30 minutes three times a day. The soreness should resolve by three to four days following the surgery. If, by that time, it has not resolved or it is getting worse, please call our office or call the hospital and ask for the anesthesia office.

7. WILL I HAVE AN EXERCISE PROGRAM TO FOLLOW?

You have been given a physical therapy prescription and my protocol. If you have not already scheduled physical therapy, please call and schedule an appointment as soon as possible. You may begin therapy prior to your initial follow-up appointment with me. If you have any difficulty arranging the therapy call my office for assistance.

8. WHAT ELSE CAN I EXPECT?

1. Numbness around the incision site is a result of the disruption of superficial nerves in your skin during the operation. This is normal and unavoidable. Most of this will resolve over time but a small area the size of a quarter may often remain numb.
2. A sudden rush or feeling of fullness with pain in the knee when going from sitting to a standing position is common following surgery. This will resolve as the swelling resolves.
3. Bruising and/or swelling of the shin and ankle are common after surgery. This is caused by bleeding from the bone and soft tissues (that are cut during surgery) into the area just deep to the skin. To reduce this, it is best to ice the leg. If at any time you have discomfort, swelling or redness in the calf (behind the leg between the knee and ankle) please call the office immediately.