

Care After a Knee Replacement

Short-term Hospital Stay (Outpatient)

After Visit Summary

This is general information. Please see your After Visit Summary for how to take care of yourself after surgery.

Your health care team will work with you to understand any challenges you have after your hospital stay. This will help your team work toward a plan to make sure you have the right care and support to help manage your health after you leave the hospital.

Your Surgery

You had surgery to replace your damaged knee.

What to Expect After Surgery

- You may feel some discomfort or swelling in your knee.
- Tell all health care providers that you had a knee replacement before you have any surgery, X-rays, dental work, or other tests or procedures. You may need to take antibiotics.

Pain Relief

- Take any prescription or over-the-counter medicine as directed.
- For the first 48 hours, you may place a cold pack or bag of frozen vegetables on your knee for pain relief and to help keep the swelling down.
 - Wrap the bag in a light towel before using.
 - Keep the ice pack on for 15 to 20 minutes and then keep it off for 30 minutes.

Activity

- Raise (elevate) your leg above the level of your heart by **placing a pillow under your calf or ankle, not your knee.**
- Avoid sudden changes in movements.
- Do not kneel or use a low toilet or low furniture.
- When lying on your back, keep the knee of your affected leg pointing straight up.
- Follow your health care provider's and physical therapist's directions for using a walker, crutches or cane.
- Follow the weight-bearing restrictions your therapist taught you.
- Follow your health care provider's directions for bending, twisting and other activities.
- Your health care provider will tell you when it's OK for you to shower, drive, return to work, exercise, lift and have sex.
- Do not take a tub bath.
- Follow your health care provider's directions for exercises and activity.
- Do not sit for longer than 1 hour without standing, stretching or taking a few steps.
- Alternate rest and activity.
- Get regular activity. Try to walk for a total of 30 minutes a day.
 - Start by walking for 5 to 10 minutes at one time and slowly build to walking 30 minutes.

(over)

- Walk often. Try to walk at least 4 to 5 times a day.
- Increase the amount you walk as you are able.
- Sleep with a pillow between your legs. Put the pillows crosswise between your legs before turning on your side.
- Put on your shoes and socks as directed.
- Avoid tobacco and secondhand smoke. They can slow your recovery.

Incision Care

- Look at the area around your incision every day and keep it clean while it heals.
 - If you have a dressing that shouldn't be removed until your follow-up appointment, leave in place and look at the area around your bandage.
- Do not put any creams, salves or ointments on the area.
- Follow your discharge instructions given to you by your surgeon. Ask him or her if you have questions.

Food and Beverages

- Eat well-balanced meals. Follow any instructions your health care provider gave you.
- Drink more liquids.
- Avoid alcohol while you are taking prescription pain medicine.

When to Call Your Surgeon

Call your **surgeon** if you have:

- a temperature of 101.6 F or higher
- problems or signs of infection at your incision site such as:
 - increased pain
 - increased swelling
 - increased redness

- odor
- warmth
- green or yellow discharge
- any change in your ability to move such as new weakness, or not being able to move your arm or leg
- pain in the back of your leg (calf)
- any change in sensation such as new numbness or tingling
- any unusual bruising or bleeding
- severe pain not relieved by medicine, rest or ice
- any problems, questions or concerns related to your surgery.

When to Call Your Primary Care Provider

Call your **primary care provider** if you have:

- feelings of being dizzy or lightheaded
- an upset stomach (nausea) and throwing up (vomiting) that will not stop
- any bowel problems such as constipation or bloody stools
- any problems urinating such as burning, urgency or frequency
- any other problems, questions or concerns.

Call 911 or have someone take you to the nearest hospital Emergency Department if you have any chest pain, trouble breathing or shortness of breath.

Follow-up Appointment

Please keep all follow-up appointments with your health care provider or specialist, even if you are feeling well.