



# After your Total Knee Replacement

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## Medications:

Pain medications will be prescribed for you to take after surgery

- You should take the Celebrex, Tylenol, and Gabapentin every day as directed until the pills run out
- Celebrex twice a day, every breakfast and dinner
- Tylenol every 8 hours, breakfast lunch and dinner
- Gabapentin three times a day, breakfast, lunch, and dinner
- You should take 1 to 2 Tramadol as needed for pain. Every 4-6 hours
- If the pain is not controlled by these three medicines then you should take 1 of the Oxycodone tablets. Every 4-6 hours

Some times people can become nauseous with pain medicines, so try and always take these pills with food.

The goal is for you to not need any pain medications by 1 month after surgery.

You will be prescribed Aspirin to prevent blood clots. Take this once in the morning and once at night until the pills run out after 4 weeks.

You will be prescribed Zofran to help with any nausea.

You will be prescribed Colace to help prevent constipation. Take this twice every day

## Pain

Pain is normal after a total knee replacement. Unlike the pain you had before the knee replacement, this pain will get better every day. The best way to deal with pain is to stay ahead of it. It is a lot harder to play catch-up than it is to stay ahead of the problem.

Elevate your leg, use ice as often as you can, take your medications on schedule, and try not to overdo it with activities.

Even if your knee hurts you should still do your range of motion exercises every day.

## **Fever**

Elevated temperatures are normal after surgery, especially in the first 5 days. This is because your body is in a state of hyper-inflammation. If you notice a fever higher than 101.0 you should take Tylenol, wait 1 hour, and then measure it again. If it is still above 101.0 then call the office.

## **Bandages**

Your surgical dressing will be changed to a waterproof dressing before you leave the hospital. You may remove this dressing 7 days after surgery. Until this time you should keep the bandage clean and dry.

If this bandage gets dirty or wet before 7 days, it can be changed by the nurse or by yourself. It should be changed to either a new waterproof dressing (Aquacell or Optifoam), or you can use clean gauze and tape.

After you remove your bandage you can leave the incision open to the air. If you want to cover it (some people do because the incision can be sensitive), you should use clean gauze and tape.

Underneath the bandage you will notice several small bandages crisscrossing the incision. These are called steri-strips. They will fall off on their own. If more than 50% of the steri-strip is already hanging off you may remove it yourself, but not before then.

## **Hygiene**

7 days after surgery you may get the incision site wet, but you shouldn't submerge or soak the incision site (eg in a tub or pool) for 4 weeks after surgery. DO NOT scrub the incision site.

If you want to clean the incision use clean warm water and soap. DO NOT USE rubbing alcohol, hydrogen peroxide, etc. as these can irritate the incision site.

For showering, the easiest thing to do is lather the skin above the incision with soap and let gravity/water carry the soap down over the incision site.

DO NOT USE any creams, lotions, or gels on the incision site until 4 weeks after surgery.

## **Bruising/Swelling**

Bruising and swelling are common after a knee replacement. Frequently this occurs in the area around the incision, but with time it is likely to migrate down your leg. This is normal, and a result of gravity.



The best way to deal with swelling is with ice and low-intensity exercise.

Redness/warmth may also occur. This is a sign of inflammation, which is normal after surgery. The best way to tell if it is a normal reaction is to press your finger into it. It should turn briefly white before it returns to red. The redness should not be painful to touch, but warmth is normal.

Your calf may become swollen after the surgery. This can be concerning because calf-swelling can also be a sign of a blood clot. The best way to tell if your calf swelling is normal post-op swelling or a blood clot is to squeeze your calf. As long as this squeeze is painless you are fine.

### **Activity**

After surgery you may put as much weight on the operative leg as you can tolerate. Most people use a rolling walker for at least a few days, but up to a few weeks. After that you may require a cane or crutches. You should try and wean off any assistive device (walker, cane, crutches, etc) completely by 6 weeks after surgery.

You should not participate in any vigorous activity (yoga, jogging, pick-up sports, etc) until 6 weeks after surgery.

Remember, the more you work on your knee's range of motion, the happier you will be!

### **Comfort**

Ice is your best friend after surgery. Apply ice to the incision site as much as you can. Always remember to keep one layer of fabric/bandage between the ice and skin, this will help prevent any frost-burns.

Your new total knee may feel stiff at first, but this is simply your body getting used to a brand-new joint.

Occasionally people's total knee makes noises like popping. Remember your old knee did that too! This will get better as the scar tissue in your knee matures.

### **Diet**

You can advance your diet as tolerated after surgery. It is recommended that you avoid fried fatty foods for a few days after surgery, as you are more susceptible to nausea during this time period.

Constipation is common after surgery. Drink lots of water, eat high-fiber foods, take your Colace, and use over the counter Laxatives and Suppositories as needed.



## Dental Work

You should avoid going to the dentist for at least 6 weeks after your surgery. After that point you may go for normal check-ups, teeth cleanings, and minor procedures.

You should delay any major dental procedures (extractions, root canals, etc) for 3 months after surgery.

If an emergency occurs and you NEED to go to the dentist for a procedure sooner than this, call our office and we will prescribe you an antibiotic (Amoxicillin) to take before the appointment.

You do not need to take antibiotics for the dentist after this 3 month window is over.

## Driving

You may not drive as long as you are taking narcotic pain medications (Tramadol or Oxycodone).

If you had surgery on your right leg you cannot drive until 4 weeks after surgery.

If you had surgery on your left leg you may drive as soon as you are off pain medications.

## Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How much does my new total knee replacement weigh?

A: About 1 pound

Q: Will I set off metal detectors?

A: Maybe. The metal we use is Titanium, which does not set off most metal detectors. Newer, higher sensitivity machines (like at the airport) scan based on density, not metal content, so your knee may set these off. The safest thing to do is warn security staff you have a knee replacement and they will screen you separately

Q: When can I engage in sexual activity?

A: You may resume sexual intercourse as soon as you feel comfortable to do so. If a certain position feels "uncomfortable" on your new knee you should avoid it

Q: Some people have told me I can't ski or run after surgery, is that true?

A: Once 6 weeks have passed, you can participate in any activity you used to do before surgery. I don't recommend you take up any new extreme sports, but your new total knee should allow you to return to the activities you used to love to do!