



Instructions for ACL Surgery Patients

IMPORTANT

Successful rehabilitation after ACL surgery has been directly associated with the ability to fully straighten out your knee at the end of rehabilitation, and following these instructions will help insure that we do everything possible to achieve this goal. Elevation of the leg along with cold therapy is critical in the first weeks after surgery in an effort to reduce swelling. This insures that the knee will move easily to regain motion once therapy is started the second week.

1. Your leg has been placed in a hinged brace after surgery for comfort and to protect your new graft.
2. The brace has been locked at -10 degrees to keep your leg as straight as possible after surgery.
3. This allows you to walk on the leg without the leg giving way and to prevent you from losing the ability to fully straighten out your leg
4. This brace is to be worn **at all times** that you are out of bed after surgery
5. The brace may be taken off when you are in bed and laying down so that you may apply the cryotherapy unit (ice packs) over the dressing
6. The optimal position of the leg after surgery is for you to be lying flat with your ankle higher than your knee and your knee higher than the heart
7. Place pillows *under your ankle* to allow your knee to sag backwards to keep it straight
8. You may practice bending the knee with no weight on it, but should return it to a straight position when you are resting and elevating
9. Please **do not** sit with a pillow under your knee, as this may lead to you being unable to fully straighten your leg after surgery.
10. If for some reason your brace becomes unlocked or loose, please contact my office for instructions on how to fix this issue

11. You will come out of your brace with your physical therapist for therapy, but will not be released from your brace until you can demonstrate the ability to walk without crutches without a limp

Medications/Diet

1. Eat only light, non-greasy foods today
2. Take pain medicine with food
3. While taking pain medicines, you may **not** operate a vehicle, heavy machinery, or appliances.
4. While taking pain medicines, you may **not** drink alcoholic beverages.
5. While taking pain medicines, you may **not** make critical decisions or sign legal papers.
6. If you have any reactions to your medicines, stop taking them and call my office immediately.
7. If you are not allergic, take one 325mg aspirin twice a day to help prevent blood clots.
8. Please keep in mind that constipation is a very common side effect of taking narcotic pain medication. We recommend that patients take precautions to prevent constipation.
 - Drink plenty of water (6-8 glasses of 8oz. a day)
 - Avoid alcohol, caffeine, and dairy products
 - Eat plenty of fiber (fruits, vegetables and whole grains)
 - Take an over the counter stool softener (Colace or Dulcolax)

Activity/Exercise

1. You may bend your knee as much as the dressings will allow.
2. You may practice quadriceps muscle tightening and straight leg raises several times every hour.
3. Please continue to move your ankle up and down and tighten and relax your calf muscle several times every hour to help reduce swelling and prevent blood clots.
4. Please use your crutches until your first post operative visit.

5. If comfortable, you may bear weight on your leg with the assistance of crutches.
6. Please elevate your knee above the level of your heart while sitting or lying down to help reduce swelling. **It is important to continuously elevate your knee above your heart until your swelling is completely down.**
7. Please keep ice applied to the knee for the first 72 hours or as long as pain or swelling persist. Do not apply ice directly to skin, or allow water to leak on your dressing.

Dressings/Shower

1. Please keep dressing dry.
2. If you have had an arthroscopy, you can expect some bloody drainage through your post-op dressing, which is normal.
3. Please reinforce your dressing with a dry sterile dressing.
4. Loosen the ace wrap around your knee if it becomes too tight or painful.
5. You may remove your dressing the third day after surgery.
6. Cover your bandage with a trash bag or saran wrap if you shower before removing the dressing.

Emergency/Follow-Up

1. Please notify my office at 631-981-2663 if you develop any fever (101 or above), unexpected warmth, redness or swelling in your knee. Please call if your toes become cold, purple, numb, or there is excessive bleeding.
2. Please call the office within 24 hours at 631-981-2663 to schedule a follow up appointment next week.
3. Please call the office before 3pm on Friday if you do not have enough pain medicine for the weekend. Narcotic pain medication cannot be called into your pharmacy and the Rx must be picked up at our office.

I have read and understand the above discharge instructions.

Patient or responsible party

Date

R.N.

Physician