

Post-Operative Instructions for ACL Reconstruction

GUIDELINES

- After 48 hours you can remove the bulky dressing and apply Band-Aids over the sutures. Keep incisions completely dry when showering with waterproof Band-Aids and/or plastic covering (Tegaderm) until sutures are removed at your follow up appointment. After showering remove and reapply fresh Band-Aids. Avoid soaking the knee in a bathtub or Jacuzzi for 2 weeks.
- If a nerve block was administered to the leg then it will wear off in approximately 12-24 hours. Begin taking the pain medication as your sensation returns. For the first 2-3 days, keep your knee elevated when at rest. Do not put a pillow under your knee at rest. Knee Extension is encouraged. Cryocuff, crushed ice, or a bag of frozen vegetables can be applied to the knee for 20 min 4-6 times a day then as needed. To avoid a burn injury, place a cloth onto the skin before applying ice.
- Please contact the office if you experience increasing pain, redness, drainage, thigh/calf pain, chest pain, shortness of breath, or fever greater than 101.5. It is common to have minimal drainage from the incisions for the first 1-2 days.

WEIGHT-BEARING AND EXERCISES

- You may put weight on the leg with use of 2 crutches as tolerated by pain for 3 weeks. The brace is to be worn at all times except bathing or when performing exercises. Use a shower stool to sit during a shower while brace is off. When ambulating or sleeping it should be locked in Extension. The brace can be Unlocked while sitting.
- Please begin ankle pumps immediately. Also, begin gentle knee flexion, quad sets, and straight leg raises the day of surgery. Please refer to the exercise instructions provided. Mobilizing at home with crutches is encouraged as it will help decrease the risk of blood clots. Most importantly, try to straighten the knee (terminal extension) for 10 minutes out of each hour while awake.



MEDICATIONS

- You have been prescribed a narcotic pain medication. Please use as directed and contact the office for any side effects. Take it with food. Do not drive, drink alcohol, perform activities which require concentration, or make major decisions while taking the pain medication. Constipation may occur and can be treated with over the counter Senokot and Milk of Magnesia. Contact your primary care doctor if this problem persists.
- Anti-inflammatories are useful for pain/swelling and can be used with the pain medication. Take Ibuprofen 600 mg three times a day with food. This medicine works together with the narcotic pain medication and may allow you to wean off your narcotic faster. Do **NOT** take this medication if you are allergic, have a history of ulcers, kidney disease, or it is otherwise contraindicated. Discontinue if you develop stomach upset.
- Unless you are allergic or it is otherwise contraindicated, take Ecotrin Aspirin 325 mg every morning with food for 3 weeks to reduce the risk of blood clots.
- Lingering effects of the anesthesia may cause temporary nausea. Start a bland, soft diet the first day and progress to a normal healthy diet. Drink plenty of fluids. If a smoker then try to quit or cut back to improve recovery.

POST-OPERATIVE APPOINTMENT

- If you do not already have a follow up appointment scheduled for one week after the surgery then please call the office to make this appointment which may be with your surgeon or the Physician Assistant. During this visit sutures may be removed, arthroscopic findings will be reviewed, and further treatment such as physical therapy will be discussed.

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Exercises after Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL) Surgery

Start these exercises the day of your surgery, after your nerve block has worn off. Be sure to start these exercises by the day after your surgery.

Ankle Pumps

Move your foot up and down as if pushing down or letting up on a gas pedal in a car.

Repeat this exercise throughout the day.



Quad Sets

Lie on your back with your legs straight and toes pointed toward the ceiling. Tighten your thigh muscles and push your knee down to the bed. Hold for 5 seconds and release.

Do this exercise at different times during the day. You should do this exercise a total of 100 times each day.

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❑ **Knee Push (Quad sets with towel roll)**

Put a small towel roll under your ankle and push your knee down into the bed. Work on getting your knee straight.

Do this exercise at different times during the day. You should do this exercise a total of 100 times each day.



❑ **Straight Leg Raise**

Lift your surgery leg toward the ceiling while keeping your knee straight. Bend the opposite knee.

Do this exercise at different times during the day. You should do this exercise a total of 200 times each day.



❑ **Knee Bending**

Sit in a chair and let your knee gently bend. You may cross your leg over your surgery leg at the ankle to help bend, but do not force the bend in the first week after surgery. The goal is to bend the knee 80 to 90 degrees.

Do this exercise 3 times each day for 5 to 10 bends.

