

7. Life With Your New Knee

Quick Guide to Home Care Instructions

Notify your doctor if:

- You have increased pain.
- You develop a fever over 101 degrees.
- Your incision appears red, more swollen and/or you notice drainage from the incision.
- You develop sudden shortness of breath.
- You have difficulty urinating.
- You require more pain medication.
- You develop calf tenderness, pain or redness.



The recovery period after surgery depends on you, your health and the condition of the joint that has been replaced. You may see and feel immediate benefits; however, you must continue to follow your rehabilitation program for several months to get the total benefit of your new joint. Participation in the gym program at 5700 Telegraph Avenue is a reasonably priced option after completion of your formal PT program. Further information may be obtained by calling (510) 204-1788.

Note: this is the timeline for the average patient. Your progress may be different depending on your individual situation.

For approximately six weeks:

Your activity level should gradually increase day by day for the next six weeks. Your doctor may see you approximately six weeks after your surgery for a post-op follow up appointment. Both your doctor and therapy team will advise you on your physical capabilities and home management activities.

The following is included to give you a general idea of the recovery timeline.

- **DO NOT** do heavy house or yard work.
- DO use nonskid rugs on floors and nonskid mats in the bathtub or shower.
- DO use handrails in the shower.
- DO keep stairs, walkways, and hallways free of objects and clothes.
- DO wear nonskid shoes or nonskid slippers that have a back for heel support.
- DO keep emergency numbers near your phone.
- DO keep phone and lamp cords short or tucked away so you do not trip over them. Watch for small pets also.
- DO a sponge bath if you have staples in place. Once the staples are removed, you may shower or bathe regularly.
- DO protect your new joint and allow for healing during this six-week period by walking with supportive devices (walker, crutches, cane, etc.) as instructed.
- DO bear weight on operated leg as ordered by your physician.
- DO have someone with you the first few times you go up a long flight of stairs or until you feel comfortable and safe on your own.

Continued>

In the future:

- **AVOID** twisting or jerking the operated leg with quick or exaggerated movements.
- **AVOID** pivoting when standing. Instead, take small steps to turn around.
- **AVOID** standing or walking with your toes turned in.
- **AVOID** participating in sports that require any jumping, jerking, pulling, twisting or running.
- **AVOID** sitting for longer than 45 to 60 minutes at a time without standing or stretching. After 2 hours you will become stiff and uncomfortable.
- Maintain a stable and appropriate body weight to prevent damage, early wear, or increased pain to your new joint

Consult with your physician if you have any questions about activities that you would like to do. Every patient has different limits and your doctor will help you determine an activity level that is right for you.

Follow-up Appointments

Your orthopedic surgeon will watch your joint closely as it heals. He or she will continue to check range of motion and strength in your leg several times during the first year after your joint replacement. Anticipate appointments at 6 and 12 weeks with yearly visits after that. Be sure to keep all appointments. It is a good idea to write a list of your questions so you do not forget to ask them at your appointments.

Dental Work Precautions

Because your new joint is at risk for infection should an organism enter your bloodstream, you will be taking special precautions. In particular, invasive procedures and dental work – including your routine teeth cleaning – provides an easy route for microbes to enter your bloodstream. Therefore, each time you go to the dentist it is important that you remind him or her that you have a joint replacement so that you can be put on short-term antibiotics to prevent any infection.

Traveling

There are no set rules about traveling, but be aware that it will be difficult for you to sit for more than an hour or two without experiencing pain. Therefore, if you are planning a long car trip, talk to your doctor or nurse and arrange for stops along the way so that you can break up the sitting time. This is important in order to prevent blood clots and for your comfort.

Driving

The average time at which patients return to driving is six weeks following surgery. Check with your doctor before returning to driving. You may need a seat cushion to provide a more comfortable angle of knee flexion.

Air Travel and Metal Detectors

Some implants may set off metal detectors. This may cause heightened screening measures for you at airports. Anticipate this possibility and allow extra time.

You may receive a card after surgery with pictures of your replacement and your knee x-ray. Typically this card or a note from your surgeon will not influence airport security screening measures.

Sexual Activities

You may return to sexual activities whenever you feel ready. However, be aware that you need to modify positioning to avoid pressure on the knee. If you would like more information, ask your therapist or nurse for handout information on sex after total joint replacement.