

home care instructions / Kevin Walsh, M.D.

1 activity

Following your knee surgery, you may want to limit your activity for the first 5-7 days (i.e. not returning to work or school). You may walk with the assistance of crutches, putting as much weight on the operative leg as comfort allows. If you experience an increase in discomfort or swelling, get off your feet, elevate your leg on 1-2 pillows and apply the cooling pad or ice pack.

2 cold therapy

Generally, this is most beneficial when used continuously during the first week for comfort and then as needed. This pad should be applied over the white stocking and under the brace. The motor tubing connects to the pad tubing. Plug the power cord into an electrical outlet and the unit will continuously circulate cold water through the pad as long as it is plugged in. You may use this type of cold therapy as often as you like. If you are using an ice pack, this can be applied for 20 minutes at a time, as often as every hour if desired. The main benefit from cold therapy is increased comfort and decreased swelling.

3 pain medication

Generally you may be prescribed 2 different medications for use at home after surgery. Vicodin (hydrocodone), a narcotic pain reliever. Use this as needed in addition to a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory. Do not exceed 2 tablets within 4 hours. Take the non-steroidal prescribed. This medication will reduce inflammation and as a result help to decrease pain and limit the need for narcotic pain medication. Take until gone.

4 brace/crutches

The knee brace is for your protection while healing and muscle strengthening occur. It should always be worn when walking and putting weight on your operative leg. The brace should be locked in extension when ambulating for the first 2-3 weeks. You may come out of the brace frequently for range of motion exercises. You should walk with the brace locked in extension until given the okay by your therapist to walk with it unlocked (generally 2-3 weeks). You will require this particular brace for up to 4 weeks after surgery. The crutches can be discontinued as soon as this is comfortable, usually between 1-2 weeks.

5 dressing changes

Your physician will see you in the office after surgery regarding your dressing changes.

6 showering/bathing

For the first 10 days after surgery, it is necessary to protect the incision sites from getting wet. You may shower 4 days after surgery as long as the knee is kept dry by wrapping with plastic wrap or garbage bag. After 10 days you may get the knee wet in the shower, but you must wait 3 weeks after surgery before submerging the leg in a bath, pool or Jacuzzi™, as long as the incisions are completely closed. The stocking should be removed for showering or bathing but should be worn throughout the first 2-3 weeks to decrease swelling and improve circulation and comfort.

7 signs of infection

With any surgery it is important to be aware of signs of infection which can include unusual looking drainage, increased redness and tenderness around the incision sites, fevers (i.e. 101 F or higher) and chills, or a sudden decrease in flexibility. It is a good idea to check the wound each day or two while at home. Also, be aware of excess bleeding or numbness or tingling of the foot or the toes. Please make your doctor aware as soon as possible should you develop any of these possible signs.

8 first post op visit

If a postoperative appointment has not been scheduled for you to return 7-10 days after surgery, please contact our appointment desk. On your first postoperative appointment you will have x-rays of your knee taken, your dressing changed, sutures removed and you will be examined by your physician. At this time physical therapy will be discussed. Outpatient physical therapy generally begins 10 days after surgery and continues up to 3 months depending on your progress.

9 If you have any further questions please call our office

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