Total Knee Replacement
Home Care

You are being discharged after your orthopaedic surgery. The following are instructions you should follow, as well as some general information.

INCISION CARE

• Keep your incision clean and dry. If your incision gets wet, pat it dry, do not rub.
• You may shower when there is no drainage from your incision.
• Do not put any creams or ointments on your incision.
• If your incision has drainage you may place a dry dressing over the incision.
• Change the dressing twice daily and as needed. If there is no drainage, you do not need a dressing.
• If you have steri-strips (white strips across your incision), leave them in place. They will fall off on their own.
• Do not wear tight clothing that rubs on your incision.
• No tub baths. Do not soak the incision in water. This includes swimming or hot tubs.

You need to check your incision daily. Call the doctor:
» If you have an increase in redness.
» If you have an increase in swelling.
» If the edges of the wound begin to separate.
» If there is any change in the color of the drainage from your wound (for example: yellow, green, or foul smelling drainage).
» If you have an increase in tenderness around your incision.
» If there is any red streaking.
» If you have a temperature greater than 101 degrees Fahrenheit.

DIET AND HEALTH

• Eat a balanced diet.
• Avoid alcohol until you are no longer taking your pain medication.
• If you are smoking, you should stop. Smoking can slow the healing of your incision.
• Drink 8-10 glasses of water per day. Talk to your doctor if you are on a special diet.

Pain medications and decreased activity can lead to constipation. To prevent this, eat a diet high in fiber and increase your water intake. You should have a bowel movement within 2 days. If not, there are gentle, over the counter medications you may use (like milk of magnesia). If you still do not have a bowel movement, call your doctor.
ACTIVITY

- Follow the physical therapist’s activity and exercise program, as well as any restrictions.
- Gradually increase your activity daily.
- Plan for rest periods.
- Elevate your injured leg when you are at rest.
- No driving until cleared by the doctor.
- No driving while on pain medications that may affect your ability to drive safely.
- Use crutches or a walker, as demonstrated by the physical therapist or the nurse, for the first 6-12 weeks after surgery. Then you may slowly start walking without the crutches or walker.
- If you have a brace or splint, wear it as directed by your doctor, nurse, and or physical therapist.
- Bear weight and walk on your leg as much as is comfortable. Walking is one of the better kinds of physical therapy and is good for muscle strengthening.
- Walking does NOT replace the exercise program you were taught, an you should continue to do your exercises.
- When lying on your side, you may find it more comfortable to place a pillow between your legs.
- You may use ice for pain and swelling. After 48 hours, if the knee is no longer swollen, hot or painful, you may use heat to help increase your range of motion. Do not use ice or heat for longer than 15-20 minutes every hour.

SEEK HELP IMMEDIATELY:

- If you have any signs or symptoms of a blood clot:
  - Firmness, tenderness, red, or warm spots on your arms or legs.
  - If you have sudden difficulty breathing or chest pain. This could be a sign of a blood clot in your lung, or a sign of an allergy to your medications.
- If your toes or fingers turn cool, or blue, or if you begin to have numbness and or tingling.
- If you fall and injure your hip.

If at any time, even years after your surgery, you develop an infection like strep or pneumonia, notify your doctor. Antibiotics should be administered promptly to prevent the occasional complication of a distant infection localizing in the knee area. This also applies if you are having dental work performed. Tell your dentist or general physician that you have had a joint replacement.

HOW TO REACH YOUR DOCTOR

Monday-Friday from 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., call the Department of Orthopaedics Outpatient Clinic at 503 494-6400.

After hours, weekends, and holidays, call the Hospital Operator at 503 494-8311 and ask to have the orthopaedic doctor on call paged.

Your doctor is: ________________________________