



# Post Operative Instructions:

## 1. Medications:

Three medications have been prescribed for you to make you more comfortable, decrease the swelling in the knee following surgery, and to reduce the risk of infection.

### a. A pain medicine (narcotic):

This is usually either Darvocet (Propoxyphene) or Vicodin (hydrocodone) depending on which pain medicines have been used before and what has been known to be effective for you. These pills should be taken only as needed for severe pain and only when pain is present. They do not aide in the healing of the knee but are used to "Take the edge off" of the pain. Do not take more than two every four hours and do not mix with alcohol. As the pain lessens, decrease the number of pills that you are taking, stopping them as soon as the pain is at a tolerable level without the pills.

### b. An anti-inflammatory medicine:

Usually this will be either Voltaren (diclofenac) or Naprosyn (naproxen). The purpose of these pills is to aide in reducing the swelling that naturally occurs following surgery and to allow easier bending of the knee after the surgery. These medicines have the added benefit that they are helpful in reducing the pain, but they should be taken on a regular basis whether pain is present or not. Because stomach upset may occur, it is best to take them after eating something and not on an empty stomach. If significant stomach upset occurs, stop taking the medication; it is an aide, but not a necessity.

### c. An antibiotic:

The risk for infection following this surgery is very low, but it is reduced even further by the antibiotics that are given in the hospital and by these pills. Only a two-day supply is necessary, and they should be taken until gone.



## 2. Bandages:

A large compression bandage has been placed on the knee, and this should be kept in place without being removed until you return to the orthopedic office on the second or third day after surgery. If you don't already have an appointment, call the office to schedule an appointment for your first bandage change. If some bleeding occurs through the bandage, do not be alarmed, this is very common and does not mean that there is a problem. Additional bandage materials may be wrapped on the outside of this bandage to prevent soiling of clothing. If the bandage feels excessively tight, you may loosen the ace wrap but do not disturb the gauze sponges underneath.

## 3. Ice:

An ice pack or frozen peas should be placed on the outside of your bandage during the first two days after surgery. This helps to reduce the swelling in the knee. Take care not to let it leak water onto the bandage.

## 4. Bathing:

The knee brace and the bandages beneath must be kept dry. For the first two days after the operation, sponge baths are usually easiest. Use of a bathtub is OK if you are able to keep the bandages dry by keeping the operated leg out of the tub. Showering is better saved until after the first bandage change and will require that the surgical incision site be kept dry by sealing it off with tape and plastic. **It is very important that the incision not be allowed to become wet as this may cause an infection.**

## 5. The Brace:

This will be your friend (or enemy, depending on perspective) over the first four weeks after the operation. You should wear it whenever you are walking, but it may be loosened or removed when lying down and/or exercising. It is designed to allow bending of the knee while protecting the surgical site, and can be easily fastened or removed. If you are uncertain of how to adjust it, wait until the first office visit to have this demonstrated.

## 6. The Crutches:

This is another friend (enemy) but the duration of use is usually much shorter. **Crutches must be used until you are able to walk without limping.** They should be used for balance and support but you are allowed to place your weight on your leg as tolerated. The idea is to walk very slowly and carefully, one foot in front of the other, increasing the



amount of weight you place on the operated leg as your comfort allows. When you are able to bear full weight on your leg and walk without limping, you may discontinue using the crutches. This usually takes one to two weeks and there is no rush to stop using them. No awards are given for stopping the crutches early, and falling can be very painful and even seriously damage the reconstructed ligament. Be especially careful around wet floors and slick surfaces.

## **7. Activity:**

The first two days after the surgery are the most painful and the most important in keeping the swelling down. During this time you should spend as much time as possible lying down with pillows placed beneath your heel (not the knee) so that the leg is elevated higher than the level of your heart. The higher it is raised, the less swelling you will have. While resting the knee should be allowed to hang such that it goes as straight as it will go. The hardest motion to regain is complete straightening, and making it go straight early makes your rehabilitation easier later. You may walk as is necessary, but minimize the amount of time out of bed during the first two days.

## **8. Exercises:**

Most patients are anxious to begin exercises as soon as possible after the surgery in order to prevent atrophy (weakening) of the muscles and keep the knee from getting stiff. Early exercises are also often helpful in "getting the ache out" of the knee. You should begin sessions in physical therapy at about a week after the surgery, but there are some exercises you should start right away.

- a. Straight leg raises:** Do as many as you can of these, with a goal of doing at least 100 per day. You probably won't be able to do this many for a few days after the operation, but do your best. Remember to contract the quadriceps strongly before lifting the leg, hold it for 3 seconds once you have lifted it, and relax it for three seconds at the bottom before beginning the next one.
- b. Range of motion exercises:** The brace allows you to bend your knee, but it may also be removed for this. Work on very slowly bending the knee as far as it will let you go and then slowly straighten it. You cannot damage the ligament by bending the knee, but because of the fluid in the knee it will feel tight and will probably not allow bending more than 90 degrees (half-way) at first. As the swelling decreases, the bending will become easier. It takes about 2 months before all of the fluid will be gone from the knee.



## 9. Diet:

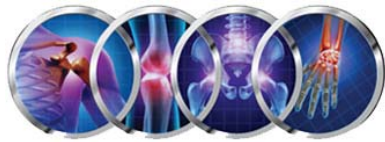
You may resume eating your usual diet after surgery, but it is best to begin slowly with liquids and then some solid food before eating anything very big. It is common to have some nausea or loss of appetite during the first day after the operation because of the anesthetic. There are no special foods or diet supplements that have been shown to speed healing after surgery, so the best guidelines to follow are to eat as many green leafy vegetables and fruit as possible and avoid greasy or high fat content foods.

## 10. Sleep

You can expect that you will not sleep well the first night. A combination of the stress of surgery, the discomfort in the knee, and feeling “out of sorts” usually conspires to steal at least one night’s sleep. A good book and warm milk are usually the best answer. Each night will get better.

## 11. Things to watch for:

- a. **Fever:** It is very common to run a low-grade fever ( $<101$ ) during the first two days after the operation and this is not a problem. If your temperature goes higher than 101 or stays higher than 100.5 for more than the first three days after the operation, the orthopedic office should be called.
- b. **Wound drainage:** During the first two days a small amount of blood may stain the initial bandage, but if fluid continues to drain from the wound after the first bandage change, the office should be notified.
- c. **Excessive pain:** The medications prescribed are usually sufficient to allow a reasonable comfort level, but if this is not the case, the medication may need to be changed or the leg examined. Call if the medications prescribed seem inadequate, bearing in mind that some pain is expected.
- d. **Medication intolerance:** Any new rash, severe stomach upset, dizziness or other difficulty such as this should be reported. Stop the medicine that seems to be causing the problem.
- e. **Constipation:** This is a very common side effect of the pain medication. Eating lots of fruit and bran and getting off the pain medication as soon as possible best treat it.



## ORTHOPAEDIC SURGICAL SPECIALISTS

**f. Lack of physical therapy:** Physical therapy should start in the week following your surgery if possible. You should contact the physical therapy office where you wish to have your therapy within the first week so that you may schedule your appointments. If you need assistance in making your appointments, contact the office so that we can assist you.

### **12. Numbers to call for questions or problems:**

For questions or non-emergent problems call the orthopedic office between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m.. Tell the receptionist the date of your surgery and the question or problem. For emergencies or questions that must be answered after hours or on weekends, call the same number and leave a voicemail message. The doctor on call will return your call.

I have read and received a copy of the above instructions.

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*Signature of patient or guardian*