

(Knee or Shoulder)

Patient & Family Information

This pamphlet will give you guidelines to follow after your arthroscopic knee or shoulder surgery. Please ask your doctor or nurse any questions you may have.

Arthroscopy is

The examination of a joint by looking through a special scope called an arthroscope. Today many joint problems can be treated using arthroscopy. Because the incisions are small and the joint is not disturbed very much, recovery is usually quite smooth. Arthroscopy is most often done on a knee or shoulder.

After Your Arthroscopy

Pain:

You can expect to have some discomfort in your joint. Your doctor may prescribe a medication for the pain. Take it as directed for the first 48 hours, as this will help you to move around.

Wound and limb care:

Wound care:

- do not disturb your dressing until you see your doctor, unless you are told otherwise
- ice pack (frozen peas) over the wound for 20 minutes every hour (when awake) may help to reduce swelling and pain

Knee surgery:

- keep your leg elevated at about 30 degrees. This will help reduce swelling and pain.
- wiggle your toes often. This increases the blood supply to them and helps reduce swelling.
- check that your toes remain warm, with normal feeling and colour
- if you have a tensor bandage, rewrap it as needed

Shoulder surgery:

- elevate your shoulder on a small pillow or towel. This will help reduce swelling and pain.
- wiggle your fingers often. This increases the blood supply to them and helps reduce swelling.
- check that your fingers remain warm, with normal feeling and colour
- if you need a sling it will be put on before you leave. Take it off at night and sleep with your arm on 1-2 pillows.

Diet:

If you feel nauseated (sick to your stomach), the pharmacist at your drugstore can suggest a medication to take. A light diet is best, slowly increasing what you eat. Drink lots of fluids the first few days (8-10 glasses of water). If you worry about constipation, talk to your pharmacist. Medications for pain, as well as being less active, may cause constipation.

Medications:

Your doctor will tell you if you need any medications. If you need antibiotics, it is important to take them until they are gone.

Showering:

You must keep your dressing dry as a wet dressing can lead to an infection. Shower when your dressing is off. Do not soak in a bath tub, hot tub or whirlpool until your incisions are fully healed, as this may lead to an infection.

Activity:

You may return to normal activities as you are comfortable. If you had knee surgery, you may need to use crutches.

Crutches:

If you need crutches you can buy them from the hospital or at some drug stores. We have an information sheet on how to use them. As well, a physiotherapist can help you.

Work:

Discuss with your doctor when you can return to work or school.

Follow up doctor's appointment:

Make an appointment to see your doctor.

Physiotherapy:

Your doctor will advise you about physiotherapy.

Exercises**After knee arthroscopy:**

Exercises improve your blood flow, strengthen your muscles and hasten healing. If you have a knee splint, leave it on until your doctor or physiotherapist tells you otherwise.

Do the following exercises. Begin with a few, and increase until you can do 10 of each exercise each hour you are awake.

- straight leg raises
- ankle rotation
- tightening of your quadriceps (thigh) muscles

After shoulder arthroscopy:

Check with your doctor.

Guidelines to Follow After Having a General Anaesthetic:

The medications given to you during surgery may remain in your body for as long as 48 hours. They may change how you think and do things. Because of this for 48 hours do not:

- drive
- drink any alcohol
- decide on any legal or money matters

Phone your doctor or go to the Emergency Department where you had your surgery if:

- your toes or fingers become cold, blue, and/or numb or tingling
- you have a large amount of bleeding from your wound
- your medication is not helping your pain
- you have pain, redness and/or swelling of your calf (the part of your leg from your knee to your ankle)
- you have redness, pain, swelling or discharge from your wound
- you develop fever or chills

You are a partner with us in planning your care. Ask questions, and be sure you are clear about how you will manage when you go home.

For general information or if you have any questions and you cannot contact your doctor, please phone:

**HEALTHLink Alberta
1-800-408-5465 (LINK)
Health advice 24 hours a day**