

Arthroscopic Knee Surgery

Patient & Family Information

This pamphlet will give you guidelines to follow after your arthroscopic knee 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.

After Your Arthroscopy

Pain:

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

Wound care:

Always wash your hands before and after touching your dressing or wound.

Helpful information:

- Wrapping an ice pack (frozen peas) over the wound for 20 minutes every hour (when awake) will help reduce swelling and pain,
- Keep your leg up for the first 48 hours will help reduce swelling and pain,
- Wiggle your toes often to increase the blood supply to them and help reduce swelling,
- Check that your toes remain warm, with normal feeling and colour,
- Rewrap the tensor 3 or 4 times a day for 2 weeks, or until the swelling is gone,
- Remove your dressing in 48 hours, unless you are told otherwise,
- If there is any drainage use an antiseptic to clean the puncture site and cover it with a Band-Aid.

Exercises:

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,
- Start bending your knee early to prevent long term stiffness. You should be able to bend your knee fully about 4 days after your surgery.
- avoid deep knee bends and twisting

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.

Diet:

If you feel nauseated (sick to your stomach) you can buy medicine that will help at the drugstore.

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. The pain medication and 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 after your dressing is off. Do not soak in a bath tub, hot tub or whirlpool until your incisions are fully healed, as this can lead to an infection.

Work:

Discuss with your doctor when you can return to work or school. You can often return to office work in 2-3 days and manual work in 2-3 weeks.

Activity:

- You may return to normal activities as you are comfortable.
- You may find that as your activity increases, your knee will swell. Use ice packs and elevate your knee if this happens.
- No sports for 2-3 weeks or as suggested by your doctor.
- Your doctor will advise you about physiotherapy.

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. Because they may change how you think and do things, 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 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.

If you have any questions and you can't contact your doctor, please phone:

HEALTHLink Alberta

1-800-408-5465 (LINK)

Health advice 24 hours a day