

Anterior Cruciate Ligament (Knee) Repair

(Overnight stay)

Patient & Family Information

This pamphlet gives you guidelines to follow after knee surgery. If you have any questions please ask your nurse or doctor.

About Your Surgery

Words to help you to understand the surgery:

- **Ligament** - a tough band of tissue connecting the ends of bones
- **Anterior cruciate ligament** - a knee ligament connecting the thigh bone (femur) and one of the lower leg bones (tibia). It limits how far you straighten your knee and gives your knee support when you turn.

This surgery repairs the torn anterior ligament. It takes about 2 hours and you usually stay in the hospital for 24 hours.

The day of your surgery:

Please bring:

- Crutches and leg brace (arranged on your Pre-Admission Clinic visit),
- Shorts or tear-away pants,
- Comfortable, supportive, rubber-soled shoes.

After Your Surgery

Pain:

- You will have some pain in your knee. Before surgery a doctor may plan for a PCA (Patient Controlled Analgesia) Pump for you to use to give yourself pain medicine after the surgery. A pamphlet will explain this to you.
- When you go home, your doctor will give you a prescription for pain medicine. Take it as directed, as this will help you move around. As well, it is common to have muscle soreness after a general anaesthetic. This lessens as you move around.
- Wrapping an ice pack (e.g. frozen peas) over the wound for 20 minutes every hour (when awake) will help reduce the swelling and pain.

Wound:

Your incision (cut) will be closed with staples that will come out in about 14 days. Before you go home be sure you know when and where you will have them taken out. You may have a drain that will come out in about 24 hours.

Dressing:

The dressing over your incision will be large and bulky. This will be changed to a light dressing the day after your surgery. A tensor bandage **may** be applied over the dressing. This should be rewrapped at least 4 times a day at home. Your nurse will give you instructions before you leave the hospital.

Brace:

You will return from the operating room with a brace over your dressing to protect your knee. Follow directions from your nurse or physiotherapist regarding your brace.

Activity:

- Plan your days so you have rest periods,
- Slowly become more active,
- The day after surgery a physiotherapist will teach you gentle exercises and the use of crutches,
- You will wear the brace for 4-6 weeks after the surgery,
- The brace is to come off for therapy and exercise, but you are to wear it when walking,
- Your doctor will tell you when to start outpatient physiotherapy sessions,
- Physiotherapy will continue for 3 - 4 months. Your doctor will tell you how to make these plans,
- Rotate your ankles and pull your toes towards your face at least 10 times an hour when you are awake.

Showering:

For safety, wear your brace when you shower. A wet dressing increases your risk of infection, so wrap your leg with a large plastic garbage bag to keep it dry.

Diet:

A light diet is best, with a slow increase in what you eat. Be sure your meals include protein, fruit, vegetables, bran and milk products. Drink lots of fluids for the first few days (8-10 glasses of water). If you worry about constipation (pain medicine may cause this) talk to your pharmacist.

Guidelines to Follow After Having a General Anaesthetic

The medicines given during your surgery may stay in your body for as long as 48 hours. They may change how you think and do things. For 48 hours, do not:

- Drive,
- Drink any alcohol,
- Make any legal or money decisions.

Follow up with your doctor

Your doctor will usually see you in 2, 4, 6 and 12 weeks, and then in 6 months.

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

- You have sudden, new leg pain,
- Your medicine is not helping your pain,
- Develop fever or chills,
- Have an increase in swelling, pain or redness around your wound,
- Have pain, redness and/or swelling of your calf (the part of your leg from your knee to your ankle),
- Have decreased feeling, movement, and/or change in colour of your affected limb, **rewrap tensor and reapply leg brace first – if no improvement right away, come to emergency,**
- Or Have sudden problems breathing.

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