

## TOTAL KNEE REPLACEMENT Post-Operative Instructions

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You have undergone total knee replacement surgery. Here are some instructions to follow once at home. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us. Dr. Uggen and his entire team wish you all the best and a speedy recovery from your surgery.

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### **SWELLING**

- It is normal to have some swelling in your lower legs after surgery.
- Walking every hour and doing your exercises will help strengthen your muscles and resolve the swelling.
- If you have swelling, we recommend that you lie down every two hours, elevate your legs with pillows, and apply ice for 15 minutes.
- Wear the support stockings you were given in the hospital, as instructed by your doctor. You may remove these for one hour in the morning and one hour in the evening. If needed, you can place a bandage over the incision to prevent irritation from clothing or support stockings.
- If the swelling does not go away overnight, please call your doctor's office.

### **SITTING AND SLEEPING**

- Sit in chairs with arms. The arms make it easier for you to stand up or sit down.
- Don't sit for more than 30-45 minutes at one time.
- Nap if you are tired, but don't stay in bed all day.
- Sleep with a pillow under your ankle, not your knee. Be sure to change the position of your leg during the night.

### **SHOWERS**

- You are allowed to shower at home as long as your incision is clean and intact.
- Sit on a shower stool or chair when you shower to keep from falling
- If you have a clear plastic dressing, leave that in place for 10 days and just let the water run over the dressing.
- If you have a cloth or gauze dressing, remove it before the shower and replace it with a new sterile dressing after the shower.
- Do not soak in a tub or swim until you doctor says it's okay.

### **PAIN**

- You may continue to have pain or soreness for several weeks after surgery.
- Gradually taper the frequency and amount of narcotic pain medication you are taking based on the amount of pain or soreness you have.
- Extra strength acetaminophen can be used but should not exceed 4000mg in one day.
- Apply ice to the incision for 15 minutes after activity to help ease soreness.

## **MEDICATIONS**

- Most patients are discharged with several prescriptions. There are 2 main categories, pain pills and pills to help prevent blood clots.
- Pain pills – take these if you need them. When taking narcotic pain medications, be sure to drink plenty of water and use stool softeners, such as Pericolace or Colace, as these pain medications can be constipating. Do not drive while taking narcotic pain pills.
- Blood Thinners - could be aspirin, Eliquis, Coumadin, Lovenox or mechanical pumps. Make sure you take the medicine properly or use the pumps as prescribed.
- Vitron C - this is an over the counter medication that will help to build back your blood count after surgery. We recommend this for most patients.

## **ACTIVITY**

- You will be using an assistive device (walker, crutches or cane). Your physical therapist will help you with this. Most patients are able to get in and out of bed, use the restroom and go up and down stairs when they go home.
- It's a good idea to have someone with you in case you need help for the first week.
- We recommend that you get up and move around every 1-1.5 hours while you are awake. This will help with stiffness and reduce the chance of blood clots.
- Don't drive until your doctor says it's okay. Most people can start driving about 6 weeks after surgery. Don't drive while you are taking narcotic pain medication.
- Sit in chairs with arms. The arms make it easier for you to stand up or sit down.
- Don't sit for more than 30-45 minutes at one time. Moving around will help with stiffness and reduce the chance of blood clots.
- Nap if you are tired, but don't stay in bed all day.
- Sleep with a pillow under your ankle, not your knee. Be sure to change the position of your leg during the night.

**Sexual Activity:** See the handout Sex After Joint Replacement: Becoming Intimate Again

## **OTHER PRECAUTIONS**

- Arrange your household to keep the items you need handy. Keep everything else out of the way. Remove items that may cause you to fall, such as throw rugs and electrical cords.
- Use nonslip bath mats, grab bars, elevated toilet seat, and a shower chair in your bathroom.
- Until your balance, flexibility, and strength improve, use a cane, crutches, a walker, handrails, or someone to help you.
- Keep your hands free by using a backpack, fanny pack, apron, or pockets to carry things.

## **CALLING THE OFFICE**

- Call the doctor if you have any additional questions or concerns.
- After hours, the on call doctor for Methodist Orthopaedics will return your call. During working hours the staff will answer your call.

## **When to Seek Medical Attention**

### **Call 911 right away if you have:**

- Chest pain.
- Shortness of breath.
- Any pain or tenderness in your calf.

### **Otherwise, call your doctor immediately if you have:**

- Fever of 101.4°F higher, or shaking chills.
- Stiffness or inability to move the knee.
- Increased swelling in your leg.
- Increased redness, tenderness, or swelling in or around the knee incision.
- Drainage from the knee incision.
- Increased knee pain.