

POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS TOTAL KNEE ARTHROPLASTY

Dr. Adam O'Brien

MEDICATION

- You will be prescribed a narcotic pain medication with or without additional Tylenol, take as instructed and only as needed. Do not take additional Tylenol unless prescribed.
 - **Pain medication may cause constipation.** You will be given stool softeners, and may take additional over the counter stool softeners (docusate, senna, Miralax, etc). It is not uncommon to go 5-7 days without a bowel movement after surgery
 - You should take these medicines with food or they may nauseate you.
 - You may not drive or operate heavy equipment while on narcotics.
 - Pain medication is refilled on an individual basis and only during office hours.
- You may also be prescribed an NSAID (meloxicam, naproxen, Celebrex), muscle relaxant (methocarbamol, cyclobenzaprine) or nerve pain medication (gabapentin). Take as directed and monitor for over-sedation or GI discomfort.
- For blood clot prevention, you will be sent home with either low-dose aspirin (81 mg twice a day), Lovenox or Eliquis. Take as directed for 6 weeks postoperatively.
- **Resume all home medications unless otherwise instructed.**

WOUND CARE and DRESSINGS

- You may remove your bandages 3-5 days after surgery unless instructed otherwise. Leave the mesh dressing on underneath.
- Wear TED hose for first 6 weeks postop to help with swelling
- Do not get your dressings wet. You may begin showering once dressings removed. When showering (after dressings removed), let water run over the incisions and pat dry (no scrubbing).
- No soaking, submersion, or scrubbing incisions until **6 weeks** postop, unless otherwise specified.
- You may notice small spotting through your dressings, this is normal. You may place an additional bandage of this area. If it becomes saturated, it is ok to change the dressings entirely and replace them

BRUISING

- The lower leg may become swollen and bruised, which is normal and is from the fluid and blood in the knee moving down the leg. It should resolve in 10-14 days.
- **If you experience severe calf pain or swelling, call immediately (see contact info).**

COLD THERAPY

- Ice should be used for comfort and swelling. Use it at least 20 minutes at a time, every hour while awake if needed. (A simple bag of peas works well as an inexpensive alternative)
- **Never apply directly to exposed skin. Place a dish-towel or t-shirt between your skin and the ice.**

CRUTCHES/WALKER

- Crutches or walker will be needed initially for comfort, until you can walk with a normal gait (heel to toe walk). Physical therapy will assist with sizing these.

DRIVING

- NO driving while on narcotics
- Will discuss when to return to driving during clinic visits. Typically patients will be considered for return to driving around 6 weeks postop.

EXERCISES

- Your inpatient physical therapist will determine if home health PT (HHPT) or outpatient PT is needed
 - Physical therapy is crucial to recovery, and much of the work is **homework!**
 - It is advised to determine where you would like to go to outpatient PT prior to surgery, as to not delay rehab
- To help gain full knee extension, place a small rolled up towel under your ankle and push back of knee to touch the floor by contracting your quadriceps muscle.
- **DO NOT put pillows under the knee while you sleep.**
- Elevate your leg for several days to help with swelling.

EMERGENCIES

- Please call if you notice any of the following (see contact info below):
 - Uncontrolled nausea or vomiting, suspected reaction to medication, inability to urinate, fever greater than 101.5 (low grade fevers 1-2 days after surgery are normal), severe pain not relieved by pain medication, redness or continued drainage around incisions (a small amount is normal), calf pain or severe swelling.
- **If you are having chest pain or difficulty breathing, call 911 or go to the closest emergency room.**

FOLLOW UP APPOINTMENT

- Please make your first post-op visit 7-14 days after surgery if not already scheduled.

CONTACT INFORMATION

- For surgery or prescription related questions or concerns, please contact:
 - **Monday-Friday (8AM-5PM) – Ortho Triage Nurse at 512-509-2525 (option 1).**



- **After Hours** (M-F 5PM-8AM/weekends/holidays) – Patient Advisory Nurse at 1-800-724-7037.
- For any scheduling or appointment questions or concerns please call 512-654-6588 (M-F, 8AM-5PM).