

## Surgery or Procedure Information

# After Your Total Knee Replacement Surgery

## After surgery

After surgery, you will be moved to the recovery room. When you wake up from surgery you will still have an IV in your arm. This will be disconnected shortly and the IV will be removed before you go home. Once you are awake and comfortable, one of your visitors will usually be allowed to come see you for a short visit.

Remember that everyone heals at a different speed. In general, this is what you can expect.

## General phases of recovery

1. Phase 1 = getting through surgery and discharge to home (about 24 hours)
2. Phase 2 = early healing, NO falls, incision healing (about 2 weeks)
3. Phase 3 = increased range of motion (ROM), strength, activities of daily living (about 3 months)
4. Phase 4 = full strength, full activities (about 1 year)

## Nutrition

Your nurse will let you know when you are able to eat and drink after surgery. You will start with water and clear liquids, then slowly start eating solid foods.

- A healthy diet helps your body heal. Be sure to eat a variety of healthy foods, including lean proteins and vegetables.
- Drinking water and eating fiber helps prevent constipation. Eat high fiber foods like fresh fruits, vegetables, and whole grain breads and cereals.
- Some people do not feel like eating after surgery. Even if you are not hungry, try to eat some healthy foods or drink nutritional shakes.
  - » Call your primary care provider if your appetite does not return to normal.

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## Postoperative comfort plan

It is normal for your incision to feel painful, itchy, burning, or numb. You might also have some swelling and bruising around your new knee. Your nurse will ask you about your discomfort and pain level. Ask for pain medicine when you need it.

You should feel comfortable enough to move, cough, take a deep breath, eat, and get out of bed without feeling too much pain. If you are feeling a lot of pain, tell us right away.

There are many things you can do to help:

- **Relax** and deep breathe = more oxygen and less pain.
- **Distraction:** Take your mind off of discomfort by doing something else.
  - » Adult coloring pages, games, crossword puzzles, reading, etc.
- **Reposition:** Change positions as needed at least every hour during the daytime.
- **Pick an area** in your home where you will be able to comfortably rest, ice, and elevate your operative leg.
  - » Be sure to keep your leg **straight** when it is elevated.
- **Cold therapy** for 20 to 30 minutes at a time.
  - » Take at least 20 minute breaks in between.
  - » Cover your skin with a towel or blanket.



To elevate, remember to keep your toes above your nose!

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## Medicines

You may be prescribed new medicines to take after your surgery. Review your medicine instructions in your After Visit Summary. These may include anti-inflammatory medicine, pain medicine, or blood thinning medicine.

Constipation may be a side effect of these medicines. Constipation can be uncomfortable and may prevent you from eating a healthy diet. Prevent constipation with these tips:

- Drink plenty of water or clear fluids. Aim for 8 glasses of water each day, unless your doctor has told you to limit fluids.
- Lower your use of opioid (narcotic) pain medicine. These are typically called:
  - » Oxycodone
  - » Hydrocodone
  - » Hydromorphone
  - » Percocet
  - » Vicodin
  - » Tramadol
- Stay active. Get up and move as you are able.
- Eat prunes or drink prune juice. Prunes are a natural laxative. Try this before using a laxative medicine.

If you are still constipated after trying these tips, a stool softener or laxative may help. Take these medicines as directed. There are many types of these medicines, including bisacodyl (Dulcolax®), senna (Senakot®), or docusate sodium (Colace®). Some contain extra fiber, like Metamucil®.

If none of these tips have helped, call your surgeon's office at 207-781-1551.

## Exercise & activity

You will be able to stand up a few hours after surgery with the help of a trained therapist or nurse. Moving around early on in the recovery process will help you heal faster!

The trained therapist or nurse will encourage you to walk in the hall and will show you how to do some exercises. They will teach you how to safely walk, get in and out of bed, climb stairs, and make your daily routine safe while you heal at home.

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## Healing at home

After you are sent home (discharged), you will likely be full weight-bearing and walking with a 2-wheeled rolling walker. You will use a walker for at least 1 to 2 weeks after surgery, then you will use a straight cane for 1 to 2 weeks after that.

Pay close attention to the instructions in your After Visit Summary. These instructions will include information about managing pain and discomfort, medicines, diet, exercise, and blood clot prevention.

At home, increase your activity over time (walking, exercises, chores). Do more activities each day with rest periods throughout the day.

Keeping a diary or journal is helpful for you and your helper. This tool will help to track your progress as you heal. Remember that asking for help is temporary! As you heal and get stronger, you will be able to do more for yourself and others. One of the most important roles of your helper is to be positive and provide support, encouragement, and reinforcement while you heal.

After surgery, your helper can do the following tasks:

- Be a second set of eyes and ears for instructions given by your care team
- Report any health concerns to the surgeon
- Manage your medicine schedule
- Remind you to change position at least hourly (during the day) to prevent stiffness and blood clots
- Transport you to and from appointments
- Prepare healthy meals
- Light housekeeping
- Errands
- Help you get dressed (lay out your clothes, help with shoes, etc.)
- Help with showering or sponge baths (see next page for tips)

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## Showering

Getting in and out of the shower can be very tiring. The heat from the shower can be soothing, but it may make you unsteady. After your surgeon has told you that it is safe for you to shower, follow these safety instructions:

- Put a chair by the shower and ask a loved one or friend to stay nearby in case you lose your balance.
- Use the handles and a non-slip bathmat to help you keep your balance.
- Sit on a shower seat/chair if you feel unsteady on your feet.
- Use a long-handled sponge to wash areas that are hard to reach.
- Use a handheld shower head, if possible.

## Follow-up appointments

You will have follow-up appointments with your provider for incision care and to make sure you are healing properly. These follow-up appointments will either be in-person or via telehealth. You will have a follow-up appointment within 2 weeks, and another one 6 to 8 weeks after your surgery. It is important that you attend these follow-up appointments.

## Continuing to heal

### Activity

As you heal from surgery, your body will continue to get stronger each day. Slowly increase your activity and movement.

- Go for walks and do the strengthening exercises that your care team showed you.
- Start by doing a few light chores around the house. Ask for help with laundry, cleaning, cooking, and pet care.
- Listen to your body and take breaks when you need it.

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**DO NOT** do any of these activities until your surgeon says it is okay:

- Driving
- Jogging or running
- Contact or jumping sports
- High-impact aerobics
- Weight lifting
- Skiing
- Hiking
- Swimming
- Golf or tennis
- Biking
- Ballroom dancing

## Relaxation and breathing

Recovering from surgery can be stressful and tiring. Try some relaxation and breathing techniques to help you during this time. Try these ideas:

- Breathing exercises — slow, deep breathing can lower stress and reduce pain.
- Sleep — make sure you get enough sleep.
- Music — calming music can help your body relax.
- Guided imagery — guides your mind and helps you relax.
- Meditation — helps focus your mind to relax.

## Keep the following instructions in mind as you heal

- Continue to do the exercises that you were shown by your care team.
- A surgical bandage will be used to cover up your incision. It is important to keep this in place to lower the risk of infection.
  - » **DO NOT** take the bandage off until your first follow-up appointment at your surgeon's office.
- **DO NOT** drive until your surgeon says it is safe for you to do so.
- Sleep in clean pajamas and wear clean clothes to prevent infection.
- Keep pets off of your bed and away from your incision.

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- If you are planning a trip after your surgery, please talk to your surgeon first. We do not recommend going on a long trip away from home for at least 6 weeks after surgery.
- Avoid situations in which you might fall or be knocked over.
- Avoid pushing off with your operative leg when climbing stairs and getting up from a chair for 6 weeks after surgery.

## Where to go for care

It is important to avoid going to the emergency room after surgery unless it is truly needed.

### When to call your surgeon's office

- Increased redness or drainage around the incision site
- The incision opens up
- Severe pain that is not lessened with rest, cold therapy, elevation, or medicine
- Fever about 101°F and/or shaking chills
- New rash on your body without difficulty breathing or swallowing
- A fall that did not result in hitting your head
- Refills for pain medicine or other medicines prescribed by your surgeon or orthopedic team

### When to call your PCP's office

- Refills for home medicines
- Increased feelings of depression or anxiety
- Illness that is not related to your surgery
  - » Sore throat
  - » High blood pressure
  - » Sinus pain

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## When to call 911 or go to the emergency room

- Chest pain
- Difficulty breathing
- A fall that resulted in hitting your head or caused extreme pain
- New rash on your body with difficulty breathing or swallowing

### For More Information

Please call us if you have any questions or concerns. We are here to help you have a safe and successful surgery.



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207-781-1551

Office hours: Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

[mainehealth.org/jointedu](https://mainehealth.org/jointedu)