



Planning for Your Surgery and Recovery at Home

A guide and checklist to help you plan ahead for your total knee replacement surgery

Total knee replacement surgery is a choice you have made to repair your painful, weak or non-working knee.

The surgery removes your damaged cartilage and bone, replacing it with a new metal and plastic joint.

Recovery after your surgery will go more smoothly and be more successful, if you understand what you will need and why. This booklet explains your need for a support person, getting ready for your care at home, the importance of exercising, insurance coverage, your length of stay in the hospital, and preventing pain.

Your Need for a Support Person

When you first get home, you will not be able to move around easily. You will need help from a support person to fix meals, do errands, take out garbage, do your laundry, and take you to clinic and physical therapy visits. A support person can be a family member or a friend. Choose a support person now, well before your surgery. Talk with the person, bring him or her to pre-surgery visits, and plan together how best to care for you after surgery.



When you get home from the hospital, or even from a facility after the hospital, you will need a support person in your house on-call:

- 24 hours day and night for the first week
- During the day for the next two to three weeks
- Several hours a day for the following weeks.

Private care giver services can send a person for home health care or support help. You can pay out-of-pocket for these services. You need to call your health insurance company to identify if they will cover any of these services.

Choose a support person now, well before your surgery. Talk with the person, bring him or her to pre-surgery visits, and plan together how best to care for you after surgery.

Can You Go Directly Home?

Before you can go home, you must be able to:

- Get in and out of bed by yourself
- Get on and off the toilet by yourself
- Walk with a walker by yourself
- Get in and out of a chair that has arms by yourself
- Get in and out of a car on the passenger side.

If you cannot do the above list by three to four days after surgery, or you do not have enough help at home, you will need a short stay at a sub-acute rehabilitation (rehab) facility. This is a skilled nursing facility (SNF) or a transitional care unit (TCU). They can give you the care and physical therapy you need until you can do the above things and go home.

If you feel you need more help than your support person can provide, contact the orthopaedic social worker, listed at the back of this booklet. Also read the sheet *Your Rehabilitation Care Options for After Your Surgery*, for more information about care choices after the hospital.

Getting Ready for Returning Home

The more you can get ready before surgery, the easier it will be afterward. Before surgery, your home will be checked for how well you can get around in it and your equipment needs will be identified. You will do these things with a physical therapist during a home visit from a local agency, or the UWMC Exercise Training Center.

You will need a walker with wheels. It needs to fit you well. You will be measured by a physical therapist at your home or at the Exercise Training Center visit. Ask for a list of stores or suppliers. If you are not in the Seattle area, look in your *Yellow Pages* under “Medical Equipment & Supplies.” Get your walker before surgery so you can:

1. Practice using it. Move around your house with it to discover rugs and cords that need to be moved, so they do not trip you.
2. Try fixing a meal using your walker. Figure out how to rearrange things in your kitchen to make it easier.
3. If you have stairs in your house, you may need to sleep downstairs at first. We strongly suggest you get handrails for your outdoor steps.
4. Get a small pack you can wear on your back or a walker basket to carry things. Your hands will be busy on your walker.

You may also need:

- One to two cold packs to wrap around your knee to decrease the pain.
- Raised toilet seat – it makes getting up and down easier.
- Shower grab bars or bath chair.
- Comfortable chair for relaxing that has arms and is not too low to get up from.
- Straight chair for exercising that a leg can bend underneath.
- Footstool to prop your surgery leg on.

Exercises

Recovering from your surgery is a full time job. You must do physical therapy and exercises at home to get the most out of your new knee. It is up to you to do the home exercises regularly every day to give yourself the best chance of regaining good use of your knee. The first six weeks after your surgery are critical. Your activities should focus on exercises, physical therapy and placing ice on your knee. Following the directions of your physical therapist will lessen your pain and swelling.

Before Surgery:

- Start the exercises on the sheets *Exercising Before and After Total Knee Replacement Surgery*. The better shape your muscles are in before surgery, the better and faster your recovery will be.
- Meet with a physical therapist to discuss preparing your home and your exercise needs.

After Surgery:

- Be sure you have a set of instructions from the physical therapist when you leave the hospital.
- If you will be getting physical therapy from somewhere other than the UWMC, you must have a prescription. This tells the physical therapist your surgeon's plan for regaining your knee use.
- Do the exercises on the sheets *Exercising Before and After Total Knee Replacement Surgery*, to regain your knee's flexibility and strength.

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Getting Insurance Information

Write your insurance company/health plan name, customer service and/or pre-certification telephone number, your policy number, and the name on your policy in the back of this booklet. Bring this checklist with you to clinic visits and the hospital. You will be asked for this information many times.

As soon as possible, call your insurance company or health plan to ask the following:

- Do I need a referral to UWMC orthopaedist or doctor from my primary care doctor? Many health plans require such referral before they will pay for your visits or surgery.
- **How much of my inpatient hospital care and how many days are covered? How much of the cost and how many days of stay are paid for at a skilled nursing facility?**
- Will I be required to transfer to a skilled nursing facility three days after surgery if my condition is stable?
- How much of the cost of physical therapy is covered? Is physical therapy at home covered?
- Will my walker and any other equipment be paid for? Does the insurance plan have a list of preferred stores or suppliers for equipment?
- Are bath aides or homemakers covered?
- Are my medicines covered by my plan?

Your stay in the hospital will be up to five days. However, this is a good question to ask your surgeon at your first visit. After surgery, you will need to stay in the Seattle area for at least two weeks.

Leaving the Hospital

Your stay in the hospital will be up to five days. However, this is a good question to ask your surgeon at your first visit. After surgery, you will need to stay in the Seattle area for at least two weeks (14 days after your surgery day) for follow-up visits. This makes getting to your follow-up visit and physical therapy easier and prevents the stress of traveling too soon after surgery. Ask at the Bone and Joint Center for a list of Seattle area hotels if you live elsewhere. You can also call UWMC's Housing Coordinator. Phone numbers are listed in the back of this booklet.

If you are from outside the Seattle area, you will need to fly or be driven home even at two weeks. This is because you will not be able to drive for at least six weeks after surgery.

Preventing Pain

Your knee will be painful after surgery. Your surgeon will talk to you about plans to help you manage your pain. Take your pain medicine only as needed and not just to get to sleep. Most patients need to take pain medicine for their physical therapy sessions. It is probably best to take the medicine 30 minutes before the session.

Before leaving the hospital, you need to get the medicines ordered for you by your surgeon. You should get enough pain medicine to last you from the time you go home until your follow-up visit. The pharmacist will explain how and when to take them. Before you go home:

- The pharmacist will bring medicines to you in your room, or
- You can pick them up at the pharmacy on your way out of the hospital.

The orthopaedic resident doctor who works with your surgeon can answer questions about any pain you may have. See the Questions? box at the end of this booklet for the number to call.

Your Pre-Surgery Worksheet

These two pages are for your use as you move through the pre-surgery process. The information you fill in will be asked of you many times. Bring this booklet with you to your visits. It will be helpful to have it close at hand. The checklist is to make sure you have completed certain steps in getting ready for surgery. There is also a list of telephone numbers you may need and blanks to fill in others you gather.

Insurance Information

Insurance/Health Plan

Name: _____

Policy Number: _____

Customer Service Phone Number: _____

Name your Insurance is under: _____

Inpatient Hospital Coverage

Number of days: _____ Percentage of services covered: _____

Skilled Nursing Facility

Number of days: _____ Percentage of services covered: _____

Physical Therapy

Home Health Physical Therapy: Yes _____ No _____

Out Patient Physical Therapy: Yes _____ No _____

Number of days: _____ Percentage of services covered: _____

Equipment

Does your insurance prefer you to use a specific equipment vendor?

If yes, Name: _____

Walker: Yes ____ No ____ Crutches: Yes ____ No ____

Other: _____

Skilled Home Nursing Care or Home Health

Number of days: _____ Percentage of services covered: _____

Checklist for Surgery

Each item in this checklist needs to be done before your surgery. Recovery after your surgery will go more smoothly and be more successful, if you have these things ready before surgery. Check off each one as you get it done. Please call Physical Therapy if you have questions

- I have read the letter from my surgeon and discussed it with my surgeon.

I have arranged for a support person to help me:

- Go home from the hospital and get settled.
- Stay with me or be on-call 24 hours a day for the first week.

So my home is easy to move around in, I have changed it by:

- Arranging for hand railings to be put in on my outside steps.
- Moving furniture, so I can get to the bathroom, bedroom, and kitchen using my walker.
- Removing all scatter rugs and anything else I might trip over.
- Putting my phone where I can reach it easily.
- Stocking up on easy to fix food.
- Getting a comfortable chair for sitting that is easy to get out of. Also getting a footstool.

I have gotten the necessary equipment:

- Walker and will bring it to the hospital on my surgery day.
- Bathroom equipment I need.

Before surgery, I have gotten ready for physical therapy by:

- Doing my exercises.
- Getting ice packs ready.
- Setting up a straight kitchen chair for exercising that has open leg space underneath it to bend my leg under it.
- Getting a pair of sturdy shoes for walking.
- Reading all the information in this packet and have written my questions on the next page. I will bring this with me to the hospital.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. The UWMC clinic staff are also available to help you. As needed, fill in phone numbers specific to your care.

Patient Care Coordinator (weekdays)	(206) 598-6293
Bone and Joint Center (weekdays)	(206) 598-4288
Orthopaedic Social Worker	(206) 598-4456
Housing Coordinator	(206) 598-4170
Exercise Training Center	(206) 598-2888
Physical Therapy Department	(206) 598-4830
Home Health Physical Therapy	_____
Resident On-Call (after hours)	(206) 598-6190
Your Surgeon	(206) 543-3690
Your Insurance Company	_____
Your Insurance Company Number	_____
Your Support Person	name: _____
	phone: _____



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