



Follow-up Visit:  
Bone and Joint Center  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Call Your Doctor If You Have:

- Fever greater than 101 °F, sweating, or chills.
- Increased redness, warmth, or foul-smelling drainage from your surgical site.
- Continued nausea, vomiting, or itching.

Call 911 or go to the emergency room right away if you have difficulty breathing, hives, or excessive bleeding.

# Knee Surgery

## *Understanding your treatment plan*

### **Pain Medications**

Some discomfort is normal after surgery. Pain medications usually will not take all of the pain away, but will help reduce it to a tolerable level. Prescriptions will be filled and given to you before you leave.

- **Do not drive or operate machinery while you are taking narcotic pain medications, as they can make you drowsy.**
- Take your pain medications as prescribed.
- Your prescription should last until your next follow-up visit.
- Medication requests take 48 hours to fill.
- Narcotic pain medications may cause constipation, nausea, and itching.

### ***Constipation***

Drink plenty of water, eat foods high in fiber, and get up and walk around every few hours. We will also provide you with “stool softener” medication that decreases constipation.

### ***Nausea***

To decrease nausea, take pain medications with food. If you continue to have nausea and vomiting after several hours, please call our nurse, as we may have to change your medications.

### ***Itching***

If you suffer from itching, you may take Benadryl for relief. If the itching continues or you develop a rash, discontinue the pain medication and call the nurse to get your medication changed.

### **Swelling**

It is normal to have some swelling after surgery, as well as drainage from your dressing.

## Questions?

Call 206-598-4288

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC clinic staff are also available to help at any time.

**Bone and Joint Center**  
Monday through Friday,  
8 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
206-598-4288

After 5 p.m. and on weekends and holidays:  
Call the Emergency Department at 206-598-4000 or call the operator at 206-598-6190 and ask to page the orthopaedic resident on call.

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UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON  
**MEDICAL CENTER**  
UW Medicine

**Bone and Joint Center**

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Seattle, WA 98105  
206-598-4288

### *Elevate*

When lying down, try to keep your leg elevated above your heart – to reduce pain and swelling. You can do this by resting it on several pillows. Sometimes sleeping in a recliner with pillows under the knee is most comfortable.

### *Movement*

It is OK to move and use your ankle and feet. This will also help reduce the swelling. In most cases you will be in a sling, and we encourage you to remove it frequently throughout the day, to bend and straighten your knee.

## The First Day After Surgery

This might be the toughest day from a pain standpoint, so stay ahead of it by taking your pain medications as soon as you feel it begin to ache.

### *Activity*

Get up and walk around several times a day. This will help you heal faster. It also helps prevent blood clots and constipation.

## The Second Day to 2 Weeks After Surgery

- **Swelling** will reach its greatest point 1 to 2 days after surgery. After that, it should decrease. It can take up to 6 weeks for most of the swelling to decrease.
- **Pain** usually reaches its peak 1 or 2 days after surgery. After that, it should slowly decrease. If you use your leg too much, the pain may increase.
- **Dressings** should only be changed if they become soaked.
- **Sutures** will usually be absorbed by the body. If nylon sutures are used, they will be removed at your follow-up appointment, 7 to 14 days after surgery.