

Patient Education

Bone and Joint Center



After Total Knee Replacement

Caring for your knee at home

Your knee replacement surgery is over, and you will soon go home. This booklet gives you information on caring for your knee at home. It tells you about preventing pain, taking care of your wound (incision), bathing, doing physical therapy, and when to call the doctor. You may want your support person to read this information also.

Preventing Pain

Talk with your surgeon or the resident doctor about how best to prevent pain. The doctor will give you a prescription or tell you to get Tylenol or Motrin. These do not need a prescription. For a prescription, be sure to call the UWMC Refill Authorization Center to get more pills before you run out. Take the pain medicine as your doctor prescribes. It is better to take it before pain gets too bad than to hold off. Pain is easier to prevent than to get rid of it once it has built up.

It is also helpful to use an ice pack. Place ice or a cold pack on your knee for 20 minutes every few hours before and after exercising.

You may get constipated from your pain medicine, iron supplement, and less activity than usual. Using a stool softener and drinking lots of liquids will help. Drink at least eight glasses of water every day.

Taking Care of Your Wound

Keep the bandage on your knee. Do not get it wet. The incision underneath needs to stay clean and dry. Stitches may be taken out before you leave the hospital. Leave the small pieces of tape (steri-strips) on. They help hold the edges of your incision together. They will fall off by themselves in about two weeks. If you have staples, or still have stitches, they will be removed at your two-week follow-up clinic visit.



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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 at any time—

Physical Therapy
Department:
(206) 598-4830

Refill Authorization
Center:
(206) 598-4398

Orthopaedic
Resident Doctor:
(206) 598-6190

Other: _____

You need to keep wearing the tight stockings (Ted hose) you have been using in the hospital. They help keep down swelling and lower the risk of getting blood clots in your legs. Wear them during the day. Remove them at night. Putting them on and taking them off may be hard for you. Your support person could help with this.

Bathing Yourself

Do just a sponge bath at the sink until day 7 to 10 after surgery. You do not want to fall or get the bandage wet. About day 7 to 10, you can remove your bandage and shower. If you still have stitches or staples, wrap plastic over your knee to keep it dry. Do not soak your knee in the bathtub, until your stitches or staples have been out for two weeks.

Using Your New Knee

Doing physical therapy will speed your recovery and help you get the most out of your new knee. Before you leave the hospital, the physical therapist will work out a plan of exercise with you. If you cannot leave home, a physical therapist will come to you three to four times in your first week at home and two to three times the second week. The physical therapist will continue to visit as long as you are homebound. Then he or she will help you switch to a clinic for physical therapy.

When to Call the Doctor

Call your surgeon or the resident if:

- your incision becomes red, swollen, tender, or fluid oozes out
- your calf (lower leg) becomes swollen or tender
- you have a fever of 101 degrees Fahrenheit or higher
- you have bad nausea or vomiting
- you cannot take your medicines.



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