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## Knee Arthroscopy with Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL) Reconstruction

Arthroscopy (scope) is a minimally invasive surgical procedure orthopedic surgeons use to visualize, diagnose and treat problems inside of a joint. The amount of work done inside of the joint does not correlate with the size of the incisions. Most arthroscopic procedures are same day procedures.

The information presented in this handout is only a general outline of what to expect following an ACL reconstruction. Each patient's arthroscopic procedure is unique. Healing is different from patient to patient and from procedure to procedure. Therefore, recovery time will reflect that individuality. Because of this, your progress may deviate from the following guidelines. Please discuss any details or special circumstances with Dr. Barry or his staff.

### General Information

#### *Prior to Surgery*

- See your primary care provider for your preoperative history and physical **within 30 days** of surgery. He or she will complete a full health assessment and identify any problems that could interfere with your surgery. You will also be informed of which medications should be taken in the perioperative period and which medications should not.
- Discontinue aspirin 7-10 days prior to surgery. Discontinue NSAIDs 5-7 days prior to surgery.
- The hospital or surgery center will contact you prior to your surgery to discuss specific details. You will likely be asked to arrive one or two hours prior to your scheduled surgical time.
- Do not eat or drink **anything** after midnight the night before your surgery. If you have medication that your primary care provider instructed you to take the morning of surgery, you may take it with a small sip of water.
- Arrange a ride home following surgery. You will also need to arrange for 24 hour assistance postoperatively, possibly longer depending on your needs.
- Type of anesthesia will be decided the morning of surgery. This decision will be made between you and your anesthesiologist.
- Remember to bring your hinged knee brace with you on your day of surgery. This will be put on in the operating room following the procedure.

#### *General Considerations*

- You will be weight bearing as tolerated following surgery. Crutches will be given to you on your day of surgery and you should be sure to use them to assist with ambulation for the first 2 weeks.
- As a general rule of thumb, you will be out of work for 2 weeks following your surgery. Further work restrictions will be addressed at your 2 week follow up appointment.
- You will be unable to drive for at least 2 weeks following your surgery and will need to make arrangements to get to and from physical therapy during this time.
- Following your surgery, you should plan on making appointments in the following intervals: 2 weeks, 6 weeks and 12 weeks.

## First Two Weeks

### *General Recommendations*

- Apply an ice pack in 20-30 minute intervals as you can for the first 48 hours then as needed. This will help reduce pain and swelling.
- Elevate your surgical extremity at or above heart level for the first 48 hours to help alleviate swelling.

### *Pain Control*

- In most cases, a nerve block is performed to reduce pain in the immediate postoperative period. This is intended to numb only the operative knee and leg for up to 24 hours.
- If you receive a nerve block, it is important to stay on top of your pain by taking your pain medications. This will help keep pain under control when the nerve block wears off.
- You will be given a narcotic for pain control, as well as a prescription NSAID called Toradol (ketorolac). You will take Toradol every 6 hours for the first 48 hours following surgery. During that time, do not take any additional over the counter anti-inflammatory medications.
- When you have finished your Toradol prescription, you may take over the counter anti-inflammatory medications in addition to your narcotic pain medication if needed. These include ibuprofen, Advil, naproxen, and Aleve.
- Avoid taking extra Tylenol (acetaminophen) while you are taking your narcotic pain medication. Most narcotic pain medications already contain acetaminophen (APAP). This will be listed on the bottle.
- Narcotics can cause constipation. You may benefit from using an over-the-counter stool softener while taking narcotics.

### *Wound Care*

- Keep your incisions clean and dry at all times. Avoid putting any topical creams or ointments on your incisions.
- You may shower and begin dressing changes 48 hours after surgery. Following this, you may change your dressing daily and as needed.
- When showering, cover your incisions with a waterproof bandage. Do not allow your incisions to get wet as this could introduce bacteria into your knee and impede the healing process.
- Leave all sutures and steri-strips in place. They will be removed at your first postoperative appointment.

### *Hinged Knee Brace*

- Your hinged knee brace is designed to protect your knee. It will protect you from doing certain movements during the day and at night. It also protects your knee from other people.
- You may remove your hinged knee brace for hygiene purposes, at home exercises and physical therapy. Otherwise, you need to wear your hinged knee brace *continuously*.

- You should take breaks out of your hinged knee brace three times a day, beginning the day after surgery for gentle range of motion of your knee as you can tolerate. This will enhance circulation within the joint to promote healing and is highly beneficial for the recovery process.

### *Physical Therapy*

- Physical therapy should start 3-5 days after your surgery. You should plan on scheduling 2-3 appointments a week for 8-10 weeks depending on your progress.
- Please call the Fridley Physical Therapy Department at (763) 957-5315 or the Coon Rapids Physical Therapy Department at (763) 717-4135 to set up these appointments.
- If you plan on going elsewhere for physical therapy, please let us know. We will give you a copy of your physical therapy orders and send Dr. Barry's protocol to the correct location.

### *Signs of Infection*

- All efforts are made perioperatively to prevent infection. These include antibacterial wipes prior to surgery, skin scrubs in the operating room, sterile technique during surgery, and antibiotics before the procedure. Despite this, infections can still occur.
- Below is a list of signs and symptoms that may represent infection. Please call the clinic immediately at (763) 786-9543 if you have any concerns.
  - Increasing redness, warmth or swelling around incision
  - Cloudy or pus-like drainage coming from the incision
  - Pain that is not controlled by your postoperative pain medications
  - Fever greater than 101°F that may or may not be accompanied by chills
  - Persistent nausea and vomiting
  - Bleeding which saturates your dressing (spotting of dressing is expected)
  - Change in skin color, temperature and/or numbness in surgical extremity

### *Signs of Blood Clot*

- After surgery, you are at higher risk of a developing a blood clot. Below is a list of signs and symptoms that may represent a blood clot. Please call the clinic immediately at (763) 786.9543 if you have any concerns.
  - Increasing pain and tenderness in your calf
  - Redness and/or warmth in your calf
  - Worsening leg pain when pointing toes towards your head

### **Two Week Appointment**

- Your sutures and steri-strips will be removed and your overall knee appearance will be assessed.
- You may discontinue using your crutches as you feel comfortable. Begin by ambulating around the house without crutches, but still taking them with you while in public. Once you feel comfortable to be without them in public, discontinue using them altogether.
- You will likely be able to discontinue using your hinged knee brace at night. However, you need to continue wearing it when ambulating until seen again in clinic in 4 weeks.

- Prescription refills and work restrictions will be addressed if needed.
- Bring your operative pictures to this appointment to further discuss if you desire.

## Two to Six Weeks

### *Pain Control*

- You should begin to wean off of your narcotic pain medications. Begin by spacing out your narcotic pain medication doses and alternating them with ibuprofen and/or Tylenol when needed.
- Most patients will require pain medications before and/or after physical therapy. For maximum effect, take a dose 30 to 60 minutes prior to your appointment.

### *Wound Care*

- You no longer need to keep your incisions covered.
- You may shower and/or bathe without covering your incisions.
- Continue to monitor for signs and symptoms of infection.

### *Hinged Knee Brace*

- You should continue to wear your hinged knee brace when ambulating for the next 4 weeks, unless otherwise directed by your physical therapist.

### *Physical therapy*

- Continue working with physical therapy. Concentrate on regaining your full range of motion.

### **Six Week Appointment**

- Your range of motion and strength will be assessed.
- Discontinue using your hinged knee brace as you feel comfortable. Begin by ambulating around the house without it, but still wearing it while in public. Once you feel comfortable to be without it in public, discontinue using it altogether.
- You may begin biking and/or jogging on a straight, flat surface only.
  - ⇒ Be careful to avoid any twisting or pivoting on your surgical extremity.

## Six to Twelve Weeks

### *Physical Therapy*

- Continue working with physical therapy and advancing with activity with their guidance.

### **Twelve Week Appointment**

- Your range of motion and strength will be assessed to ensure that you are on track with your individual recovery process.

- No further follow up appointments indicated unless pain or lack of motion and/or function persists.
- You may now begin to advance with your activities as you can tolerate being cautious about pivoting on your surgical extremity for another 2-3 months.
- ❖ The earliest you should plan on returning to full sports is 6 months postoperative. A brace is recommended for protection and stability while participating in competitive athletics. You can be fitted for the brace at this appointment if you are interested.