



What to Expect after Knee Arthroplasty

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1. You will spend 1 night in the hospital/care suite
2. You will be up and walking the day of surgery
 - a. A cane or walker will be provided by the facility for support
3. **Physical therapy (PT)** should be done 2 times a week for at least 5 weeks and then down to 1 time a week until all goals are met
 - a. Regaining motion (flexion and extension), decreasing swelling, and pain management are the goals of therapy
4. **The first 6 weeks after surgery are the most challenging!**
 - a. **There will be a lot of swelling** above and below the knee (usually increases 3–5 days post-op)
 - i. **Elevate leg** above your heart
 - ii. **Ice at least 5-6 times a day** (20 minutes on 20 minutes off)
 - iii. **Compression** – use stockings, ace wrap, or compression sleeve
 - iv. **Ankle pumps** (while leg is elevated, repeatedly point and flex foot)
 - Pushes swelling out of leg and back into the lymph system
 - v. Swelling will come and go throughout recovery
 - b. **There will be pain** (usually increases 3–4 days post-op)
 - i. Read through the *Narcotics/Pain Medication* handout
 - ii. This is part of the healing process
 - c. **Range of motion will be limited** – due to pain and swelling
 - i. You have to push through pain to get motion back
5. **Common post-surgical symptoms**
 - a. **Bruising above and below knee** (entire leg may bruise)
 - i. Thigh bruising is due to the tourniquet used during surgery
 - b. **Post-surgical drainage on the bandage** – this is normal and expected. Unless it is seeping out of the bandage, there is no need for concern.
 - c. **Warmth to the touch** - this is normal
 - i. Symptoms of possible infections
 - Fever/chills
 - Drainage
 - Increase in pain – different than surgical pain
 - Red streaks or increase in redness (usually bright red)
 - Unexplained loss of range of motion or the inability to walk
 - d. **Swelling** – usually increases 3–5 days following surgery
 - e. Numbness

- f. Stiffness
 - i. Work through this in physical therapy and do at home stretches and exercises
- g. **Trouble sleeping at night** – This is a common complaint!
 - i. Medications to try: Melatonin, Tylenol/Aleve
 - ii. Prednisone may be prescribed
- 6. **Anticoagulant medications** for blood clot prevention
 - a. Aspirin 81mg 2/day for 6 weeks
 - b. Other medications, as directed (if you are at risk for a blood clot)
- 7. **Prescription pain medications**
 - a. **There will be limited refills of the narcotic medications** – you may need to pay out-of-pocket for refills due to insurance restrictions
 - b. Read through *Narcotics/Prescription Medication* handout
 - c. **Narcotic medications are used to help manage post-surgical pain, not to make it go away completely**
 - d. Make sure to take stool softeners while using the narcotic medications
- 8. **Showering:**
 - a. 3 days after surgery
 - b. Let water run over large bandage
 - c. Do not scrub
 - d. Do not remove bandage
 - e. Pat dry
- 9. **Wound management:**
 - a. Keep large bandage on
 - b. This will be removed at the first post-op appointment
- 10. **Driving depends on the following:**
 - a. Which knee the surgery was on
 - b. Must be off narcotic medications during the day
 - c. Must be able to slam on the brakes
 - d. If you feel you are ready, practice in a parking lot before you go on the roads
- 11. **Precautions:**
 - a. Avoid pivoting, twisting, or kneeling on the operative leg
 - b. Do not apply any heat to the knee or aggressively massage if for the first 2-3 weeks
 - c. Avoid barefoot walking – Wear supportive shoes/sandals to avoid stress on the knee
 - d. Avoid submerging until 6-8 weeks after surgery
 - e. Travel is not advised until about 8 weeks after surgery

***Dental Visits:** No dental appointments for 3 months following a knee replacement. Following your knee replacement, you will need to be on an antibiotic prior to going to the dentist for 2 years. Call our office to get the prescription.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Nick Thorn at 651-351-2618 or SaterbakAcareteam@tcomn.com