

## Initial Post Op ACL Instructions

### Instructions

#### **Activity Level:**

You may bear weight as tolerated on the operative leg only while wearing the brace and AFTER THE NERVE BLOCK HAS WORN OFF. Do not attempt to put full weight on the surgical leg until you have regained feeling, movement, and strength (usually within 24 hours).

Before attempting to bear weight on the leg, you should be able to:

- Perform a straight leg raise from a laying position against gravity without any difficulty.
- From a sitting position with your heel resting on the floor, be able to lift your leg up against gravity (with the brace on)
- Be able to perform ankle pumps
- Be able to tighten your thigh, calf and gluteal muscles

Use the crutches initially. Once you feel stable, you may discontinue their use, unless otherwise instructed. Your therapist will let you know when it is safe for you to ambulate without the brace. **If you also had a meniscal repair**, you will keep the brace locked straight when walking for 6 weeks. If your surgery was on the right knee, do not drive until released by your doctor. You may unlock the brace and gently bend the knee to 30 degrees to get in the car. DO NOT adjust the brace any greater than a 30 degree lockout without specific instructions from your physical therapist.

### Exercises:

The exercise sheet explains several exercises you can do until your first post op visit. You may remove your brace to do these exercises. The exercise may include:

- Straight leg raises
- Quadricep sets
- Ankle pumps
- Bending/straightening the knee (heel slides)

A physical therapy appointment should already be set up for between 8 to 10 days after surgery. Until your first therapy appointment, it is important for you to be doing at least the straight leg raises, ankle pumps and isometric thigh exercises frequently (at least every half hour), as this will decrease your risk for a blood clot.

### Ice/Elevation:

Keep the polar care/ice man on for the entire first week after surgery. You should turn it on for 1 hour and off for 1 hour for best results. If you do not have a polar care unit, you may use an ice pack to the top of the knee. Only keep ice packs on for 20 minutes at a time to prevent skin injuries. Keep the knee elevated for the next 1-2 days. Lay flat (not in a recliner) with your foot above your knee and your knee above your head. Some swelling and bruising of the knee is to be expected. Report swelling that involves the entire leg or pain in the back of the leg or calf.

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### Dressing and Bathing:

Keep your dressing dry and clean. You may sponge bathe the first 3 days then shower after that. A small amount of bloody drainage on the bandage can be expected. The initial dressing can be removed 3 days after surgery. If there is still bleeding you can cover the incision with gauze or band aids. Leave the sutures in place. If the wounds are dry, you do not need to cover them. If there is a small amount of drainage, cover them with band aids or gauze, and replace the ACE. EXCEPT while bathing, please keep the ACE on until your follow up appointment. Do not soak your incision site in water for 2 weeks, i.e. no baths, hot tubs, swimming, etc.

### Diet:

Start with a liquid and soft diet today. Tomorrow you may advance your diet as tolerated.

### Medications:

Resume your regular medications unless directed otherwise. If you do not take a blood thinner regularly, **Take Aspirin 325 mg once a day for 1 month post- operatively to help prevent blood clots.** If you take a baby aspirin, replace it with the 325 mg aspirin for 1 month. If you take blood thinners consult with your surgeon. You may also take ibuprofen 800 mg, 3 times daily with food for pain.

Please take your post- operative medications as prescribed on the bottle. Do not take on an empty stomach. Guard against constipation by taking a stool softener (see constipation protocol). If you are having difficulty controlling your pain with the prescription you have been provided with, please contact our office.

### Deep Breathing Exercises:

- It is important that you do coughing and deep breathing as instructed to keep your lungs open while you heal. If you do not practice deep breathing and coughing after surgery you may develop lung problems, like pneumonia.
- To perform deep breathing exercises, take a slow, deep breath in through your nose. Hold your breath for 2-5 seconds, then gently and slowly breathe out through your mouth with pursed lips (like blowing out a candle). REPEAT 10-15 times every ½ hour while awake.

**DO NOT** Drive, operate hazardous machinery, drink alcoholic beverages, or make important personal or business decisions for 24 hours after surgery, or while taking your pain medication.

### Report these signs immediately:

Excessive swelling/redness around your incisions, temperature of 101 degrees or higher, excessive pain not controlled with elevation, ice, and pain medications, excessive drainage of blood or fluid, calf pain, uncontrolled nausea or vomiting.

Have a responsible adult remain with you for the first 48 hours after surgery. If you have any questions or concerns before your next scheduled appointment, please call my office at 541-472-0603.