

ACL RECONSTRUCTION: POST-SURGICAL CARE

DIET

- Begin with clear liquids and light foods (juice, soups, etc.)
- Progress to your normal diet if you are not nauseated

WOUND CARE

- It is normal for the knee to bleed and swell following surgery. If blood soaks through the bandage, do not become alarmed, simply reinforce with additional dressing
- Loosen bandage if swelling of the foot and ankle occurs
- To avoid infection, keep surgical incisions clean and dry – you may shower by placing a plastic covering over the surgical site beginning the day after surgery. NO immersion of the leg in water (bath, hot tub, etc). It is safe to take a sponge bath keeping your incisions dry.
- Remove surgical dressing on the **SEVENTH** post-operative day – if minimal drainage is present, apply waterproof band-aids or a clean dressing over incisions and change daily. You may then shower normally after the seventh day, but do not soak the leg. Leave dressing on if it can't be removed easily or safely.

MEDICATIONS

- Pain medication is injected into the wound and knee joint during surgery. This will wear off within 8-12 hours
- Most patients will require some narcotic pain medication for a short period of time – this can be taken as per directions on the bottle.
- Common side effects of the pain medication are nausea, drowsiness, and constipation – to decrease the side effects, take medication with food – if constipation occurs, consider taking an over-the-counter laxative.
- If vomiting occurs, try reducing the amount of narcotic medication you are taking, reduce your food consumption, and take 1-2 tablets of Gravol every 4 to 6 hours.
- Do not drive a car or operate machinery while taking the narcotic medication

- Ibuprofen 200-400mg (i.e. Advil) may be taken in between the narcotic pain medication to help smooth out the post-operative 'peaks and valleys', reduce overall amount of pain medication required, and increase the time intervals between narcotic pain medication usage

ACTIVITY

- Elevate the operative leg to chest level whenever possible to decrease swelling
- Do not place pillows under knees (i.e. do not keep knee in a flexed or bent position), but rather place pillows under foot/ankle
- Use crutches to assist with walking – you are able to bear as much weight as tolerated on operative leg unless otherwise instructed by Dr. Abouali. Do not engage in activities which increase knee pain/swelling (prolonged periods of standing or walking) over the first 7-10 days following surgery
- Use your crutches for a total of 4 weeks. You cannot drive during this time period. NO driving until instructed otherwise by physician.
- Avoid long periods of sitting (without leg elevated) or long distance traveling for 2 weeks
- May return to sedentary work or school 3-4 days after surgery, if pain is tolerable

CRYOTHERAPY

- Begin once you get home from surgery.
- Use cryotherapy device (or ice packs) continuously for 20 minutes, then take a 2-hour break, and repeat. Use ice until your first post-operative visit – remember to keep leg elevated to level of chest while icing.

EXERCISE

- Begin exercises 24 hours after surgery (straight leg raises, quad sets, heel slides, and ankle pumps - Google search or Youtube for instructions).
- Discomfort and knee stiffness is normal for a few days following surgery
- It is safe and, in fact, preferable to stretch and bend your knee
- Complete exercises 3-4 times daily until your first post-operative visit
- Do ankle pumps continuously throughout the day to reduce the possibility of a blood clot in your calf (uncommon)
- Formal physical therapy (PT) may begin after 7-10 days . Please provide your therapist with my protocol (usually emailed to you prior to your surgery).
- If you need a *RECOMMENDATION* for a therapy clinic, please email or call Dr. Abouali's office

BRACE

- Your brace (Velcro Zimmer splint) should be worn fully extended (straight)) for 4 weeks
- Remove brace for flexion (bending) and other exercises done in a non-weight bearing position (i.e. lying or sitting)
- Take the brace off for 20 minutes while using the icing machine, or to clean your leg

EMERGENCIES

Contact Dr. Abouali's Office at 416-546-7373 if any of the following are present:

- Severe pain, swelling or numbness that does not improve with ice, elevation of leg, or medications
- Fever (over 101°F - it is normal to have a low grade fever for the first day or two following surgery) or chills
- Redness around incisions
- Continuous drainage or bleeding from incision (a small amount of drainage is expected)
- Difficulty breathing
- Excessive nausea/vomiting

****If you have an emergency that requires immediate attention, proceed to the nearest emergency room. Please do not email for medical issues.**

FOLLOW-UP CARE/QUESTIONS

Your first post-operative appointment will be in Michael Garron Hospital fracture clinic. In general, this appointment will take place 1-2 weeks after your surgery. You will receive your appointment before leaving hospital the day of surgery. If not, please contact my office.