

Dr. Kurt Rathjen
TOTAL KNEE REPLACEMENT---POST OP
INSTRUCTIONS

ACTIVITIES AT HOME

General Guidelines

- It is common to have a low-grade fever after surgery. Call if you have a fever over 101 degrees F.
- Swelling is normal for the first three to six months after surgery. Elevate your leg and apply ice to your knee.
- Calf pain, chest pain or shortness of breath are signs of a possible blood clot. Notify the office immediately if you notice any of these symptoms.

Guidelines for wound care

- Keep the incision clean and dry.
- It is okay to shower with a dressing on your incision until the staples are removed. Do not get the incision soaking wet (no bath or swimming). Change the dressing when you get out of the shower.
- Your staples will be removed 10 days after surgery and steri-strips will be applied. No more dressings will be required.
- You may get the incision wet—shower, bath, or swim the day after the staples is removed.
- If the steri-strips do not fall off after 5 to 7 days, then remove the steri-strips and begin to massage the incision with hand lotion, aloe, or Vitamin E. Do this for 5 minutes twice a day.
- Notify the office if the wound appears red or begins to drain.

Medications

- Take all medications as directed. You will probably be given a blood thinner to prevent clots from forming in the veins of your calf and thigh, because these clots can be very serious.
- Do not restart taking anti-inflammatory or arthritis medicines until you have stopped taking all blood thinners.

- Narcotic pain medication can cause constipation. Drink plenty of fluids and use a stool softener or laxative (Senokot 2 tablets at bedtime) if needed. Senokot is available over the counter.
- Because you have an artificial joint, it is especially important to prevent any bacterial infections from settling in your joint implant. Be sure to notify your dentist that you have a joint replacement. You should take antibiotics before you have any dental work.

Diet

- By the time you go home from the hospital, you should be eating a normal diet.
- Continue to drink plenty of fluids.
- Avoid excessive intake of Vitamin K while you are taking the blood thinner medication. Foods rich in Vitamin K include broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, liver, green beans, garbanzo beans, lentils, soybeans, soybean oil, spinach, kale, lettuce, turnip greens, cabbage and onions.

Resuming normal activities

Once you get home, you should continue to stay active. The key is to remember not to overdo it! While you can expect some good days and some bad days, you should notice a gradual improvement and a gradual increase in your endurance over the next 6 to 12 months. The following are guidelines:

- Physical therapy exercises: Continue to do the exercises prescribed several times a day. Riding a stationary bicycle can help maintain muscle tone and keep your knee flexible.
- Driving: You may be able to begin driving in a week or so, provided you are no longer taking narcotic pain medications. Remember that your reflexes may not be as sharp as before your surgery. Patients that have had their left knee replaced usually drive sooner than patients that have right knee replaced.
- Metal detectors: The sensitivity of metal detectors varies and it is possible that your prosthesis will cause an alarm. You should carry a medic alert card indicating you have an artificial joint. You will receive a card at your first post-operative appointment.
- Sexual relations can be safely resumed approximately 4 to 6 weeks after surgery.
- Return to work: Depending on the type of activities you perform, it may be 4 to 8 weeks before you return to work.

- Other activities: Walk as much as you like, but remember that walking is no substitute for the exercises the physical therapist taught you. Swimming is also recommended; you can begin as soon as the staples are removed. Avoid activities that put stress on the knee. These activities include: tennis, badminton, contact sports, racquetball, jumping, squats, skiing or jogging. Do not do any lifting more than 40 pounds.

Please keep your scheduled post-operative appointment
_____ (approximately 4 weeks after surgery)

Important phone numbers:

- Main number: 214-824-4866
- Liz McMurry, R.N., F.N.P., O.N.C.: 214-824-4972