

### **What You Should Expect After ACL Surgery**

Your knee may remain warm to the touch and appear swollen for several weeks after surgery. This is normal. The swelling may vary as you increase your activity. The skin on the outside of your knee may have some patchy numbness or sensitive areas. All of these signs are normal and will diminish over several months. If you have any doubts about what to expect, please ask your doctor or orthopaedic staff.

**Icing:** Cryotherapy (icing an injury) has been shown to decrease pain, improve sleep and decrease the need for pain medications. There are many different methods for icing. These can be as simple as putting a bag of ice on the injured area to as complex as using state of the art cold therapy compression devices. If you elected to get a cold therapy device, please refer to the device handout for instructions on proper usage. Ice the knee for 20-30 minutes each hour as needed. This is especially important for the first 48 hours after surgery. Be sure to protect your skin by placing a T-Shirt or cloth between your skin and the cooling unit or icepack.

Warning: any type of cryotherapy can be cold enough to seriously injure the skin. When using cold therapy, inspect the skin at least every 20 minutes. Stop using cold therapy if you experience any adverse reactions, such as: increased pain, burning, blisters, increased redness, discoloration, welts, or skin changes.

**Swelling:** Keep your leg elevated as much as possible for the first few days after surgery.



**Bathing/ Showering:** Keep the incisions clean and dry until your follow up appointment.

**Dressing Care:** You will leave the hospital with a TED hose on your leg and a dressing covering your knee. Unless your orthopaedic surgeon instructs you otherwise, leave the dressing on until it is removed by your orthopaedic surgeon, or physical therapist.

**TED Hose:** It is common to have swelling in the legs, ankles and feet after surgery. It is beneficial to wear TED hose until your follow up appointment to decrease swelling. It is ok to remove the stockings if they are uncomfortable or to wash them. It is best to wear them as much as possible.

**Bearing Weight:** You must use your brace and crutches after surgery. You can gradually put more weight on your leg as long as you are in the brace as your discomfort subsides and you regain strength in your knee. You will work with physical therapy to advance away from crutches.



**Driving:** It is illegal for you to drive if you have any disability or if you are taking narcotic pain medication. You may drive when your leg is pain free, you are walking normally and you are not taking narcotic pain medications. This is generally three to six weeks after surgery.

**Medications:** Generally you will be prescribed a narcotic pain medication to help relieve discomfort following surgery. Narcotic pain medications are constipating, so it is important that you eat a high fiber diet and drink plenty of water while you are taking them. You can not drive or operate any kind of machinery while taking pain medications. Do not drink alcohol while

taking pain medications. It is important to take these medications as directed and only take them as necessary for pain.

**Warning Signs:** Call your orthopaedic surgeon immediately if you experience any of the following:

- Fever of 101.5° F or higher.
- Chills.
- Persistent warmth or redness around the knee.
- Persistent or increased pain.
- Significant swelling in your knee.
- Shortness of breath or chest pain
- Unusual bleeding (some surgical wound drainage is normal)
- Numbness or tingling of the arm or hand

Go to the Emergency Room immediately if you experience any CHEST PAIN or SHORTNESS OF BREATH, as these symptoms can be a sign of a life threatening condition.

<b>Initial Exercise Program</b>	
Straight Leg Raises: 10 Repetitions - Lie on your back, with uninvolved knee bent, straighten your involved knee. Slowly lift about 6 inches and hold for 5 seconds. Continue lifting in 6-inch increments, hold each time. Reverse the procedure, and return to the starting position. Repeat 10 times. Advanced: Before starting, add weights to your ankle, starting with 1 pound of weight and building up to a maximum of 5 pounds of weight over 4 weeks.	