



## Knee Arthroscopy Post-Op Instructions

The following information is designed to answer some of the frequently asked questions regarding what to expect and what to do after arthroscopic surgery. These are general guidelines, if you have any questions or concerns, please give us a call.

### **Dressing and Wound Care**

During arthroscopic surgery, the joint is irrigated with water. There will typically be three small incisions. Your knee will be wrapped with gauze and then covered with an ace bandage. Water may gradually leak through these incisions, saturating the bandage. This blood tinged drainage may persist for 24-36 hours. If it has not significantly decreased by this time, please call our office.

Swelling in the leg, calf or ankle is usually due to constriction by the ace bandage. If it becomes too tight, the ace bandage should be loosened and the leg elevated above the level of the heart until the swelling decreases.

The gauze bandage may be removed the day after surgery. Please do not remove the steri-strips. As soon as the incisions are dry, you may leave them uncovered. Do not use ointments such as Neosporin on the incisions. You may shower the day after surgery, but the incisions should not be soaked (i.e., bathtub, hot tub, swimming pool, etc.). Please try to keep the steri-strips dry. GLAD Press and Seal works as a great barrier. If the incisions show any signs of infection, please contact our office.

Specifically, if there is increased redness, persistent drainage, if you have fever, or if the pain does not progressively decrease, you should call the office.

Reapplying the ace bandage for compression can help minimize swelling. It should be worn while you are up and about. Otherwise, avoid any constrictive dressings or bandages as they might increase the chance of complications.

### **Ice**

During the first 48 hours, ice can be helpful to decrease pain and swelling and is especially important during the first 24 hours. Ice bags/packs should never be applied directly to the skin. They should be wrapped in a towel and applied for 15 minutes at a time every two to three hours. If the skin becomes very cold or burns, discontinue the ice application immediately.

### **Ambulation and Movement**

Unless you have been otherwise instructed, you will be allowed to bear as much weight on your leg as is comfortable immediately after surgery. Crutches may be used as necessary to help decrease discomfort. They are usually only needed for a day or two.

Elevation of your leg above the level of your heart can be very helpful in minimizing discomfort and swelling, especially in the first 48 hours following surgery. This is most easily accomplished by placing two to three pillows length wise under your knee so that your whole leg is supported.

Your level of discomfort will most often be your best guide in determining how much activity is allowed. Remember that it is very easy to “over-do” in the first few days after surgery and any increase in pain or swelling usually indicates that you need to decrease your activities. Please be careful on slippery surfaces, steps or anywhere you might fall and injure yourself. If you feel unsteady, ask someone to help you.



## **Knee Arthroscopy Post-Op Instructions (con't)**

### **Medications**

You will be given a prescription for pain medication. If you have any known drug allergies, check with the nurse prior to taking any medication. Please note that we are unable to call in prescriptions for narcotics after office hours. If you need a refill, call the office early in the day. This is especially important if the weekend is approaching. Some medications do have side effects. If you have any difficulty with itching, nausea, or other side effects, discontinue the medication immediately and call our office. Pain medication often causes drowsiness and we advise that you do not drive, operate machinery or make important decisions while taking medication.

Aspirin serves as a mild blood thinner and may decrease the chance of blood clots forming in the leg. Although this is uncommon, it can be a difficult problem. If you are able to take aspirin, you should take one aspirin (325mg) twice daily for two weeks following your surgery. It is best to take one in the morning and one in the evening and to avoid taking them on an empty stomach. If you are under 16 or have any unusual medical problems, please check with the nurse about whether you should take aspirin.

### **Exercise/Physical Therapy**

Most simple knee arthroscopies do not require physical therapy. If prescribed (ACL surgery), therapy usually begins within a few days after your surgery. The therapist will outline an exercise program specific to your type of surgery. The purpose of physical therapy is to help regain the mobility and strength in your knee. If you have any questions regarding your exercise program, please contact the physical therapist. If you are unsure about when or where your visit is, please call the nurse and she can help clarify what you need to be doing.

### **First Post-Operative Visit**

Your first post-operative appointment will usually be within a week following your surgery. The findings at surgery, long-term prognosis, and plans for rehabilitation will be discussed at this appointment. If you are unaware of when your post-op appointment with Dr. Harlan is, please call the office and someone will help get you scheduled.

### **Communications**

If you are having any problems, contact us right away. Please call the office number, (816)-995-0204. Remember, if your pain increases, check for signs of infection (redness, fever, etc.), decrease your activities, use ice and take your pain medication as prescribed. If the pain persists, or if there are signs of infection, call our office.

### **ACL patients:**

Unless otherwise instructed the post-op brace is only worn the first few days then discontinued and you can weight bear as tolerated on your operative leg.