

# After Your Knee Arthroscopy

## For patients going home after surgery

Read this pamphlet to learn about:

- How to take care of yourself at home
- How to cope with pain
- What activities are safe
- What to do in case of emergency
- When to see the surgeon for a follow-up



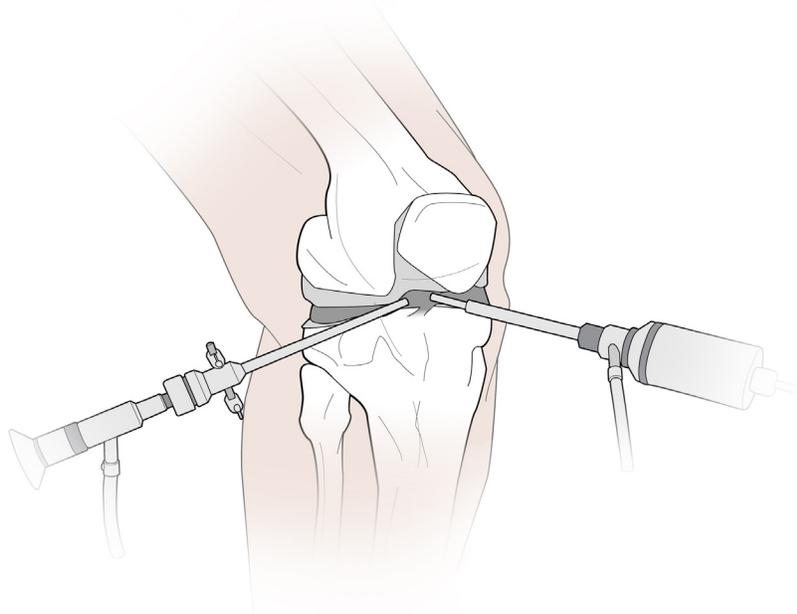
### **You have had an anesthetic or narcotic medicine.**

- Do not drive a car or drink alcohol for 24 hours.
- Have a responsible adult stay with you overnight.



## **What is a knee arthroscopy?**

Knee arthroscopy surgery lets your surgeon look inside your knee joint and maybe repair the problem found during the surgery. The surgery is done with a scope through 3 small incisions (cuts) in the area of the knee.



## **What can I eat and drink after my surgery?**

You can go back to eating and drinking what you normally would. Slowly start by having fluids and soups on the day of the surgery. Then return to your normal diet the next day.

If you feel nauseated (sick to your stomach) or you are vomiting, you can get anti-nausea medicine such as Gravol. You can buy it from your pharmacy without a prescription.

Take the anti-nausea medicine as directed and drink liquids until the nausea passes. Then slowly start to eat what you usually eat.

## How much activity is safe?

When you go home, rest on the first day.

The next day you can slowly increase your activity level. But, if you have new pain or swelling and stiffness, **STOP the activity**. You may be doing too much, too quickly. Lower your activity level. You can try again when you are not feeling pain, swelling or stiffness and then slowly return to your normal everyday activities.

When you are resting, raise your leg on 1 or 2 pillows when you are sitting or lying down. This helps prevent swelling.

- Do not put the pillows directly under your operated knee. Place them under your calf and foot.
- Do not cross your legs.

It is important to walk.

- Start by taking short walks around the house and then longer walks as you feel stronger. Slowly begin to do more of your everyday activities.
- You can walk with your full weight on both legs (unless your surgeon has given you specific instructions).
- You can walk up and down stairs. Just remember to hold onto the hand rail.

You **do not** need crutches when walking (unless your surgeon has told you to use them).

- If your surgeon has told you to use crutches, follow your surgeon's instructions.
- You can also read the "How to Use Crutches" pamphlet if you have never used crutches before.
- You can find this pamphlet on our Patient Education website [www.uhnpatienteducation.ca](http://www.uhnpatienteducation.ca)

- Do not stand for long periods of time.
- NO strenuous exercises or activities like jogging, cycling, swimming or aerobics until your surgeon tells you it is safe.
- Your surgeon will let you know when you can return to work, play sports and drive a vehicle.

## **How do I take care of my wound?**

Always keep your tensor or dressings clean and dry.

Remove your tensor or dressing **3 days** after your surgery. After the 3 days do not put a dressing back on. Put clean bandages on the wounds until you see your surgeon.

If you have steri-strips (tape) under the dressing, leave them on for **10 days**. If they begin to fall off earlier, remove them and throw them away.

### **To remove the dressing follow these steps:**

- Remove the outer dressing 3 days after your surgery, but leave the steri-strips in place for 10 days.
- Put bandages or clean gauze on the wound. You can buy these at your local pharmacy.
- Keep your wounds covered with a new bandage every day for 7 days.

You may have some bleeding that soaks through the bandage. This is normal.

**If this happens follow these steps:**

- Raise your leg.
- Put gentle pressure over the area that is bleeding for 15 minutes.
- When the bleeding stops, remove the dressing and put on clean bandages.
- Rest with your leg raised for 30 minutes after the bleeding has stopped.
- Your ice pack or your cold compress cuff will help stop the bleeding. Once you have applied gentle pressure and you have applied a clean gauze, put the ice pack or cuff back on.

During the operation, your surgeon may have placed a tourniquet on your thigh and inflated it to control bleeding. The pressure from the tourniquet can sometimes cause discomfort and bruising of your thigh. **This is normal and will get better with time.**

If you have stitches, they will be removed at your next follow-up appointment.

**If you have a tensor wrap,** you can put it back on. Only wear it for comfort, if needed. Do not wear the tensor after 5 days.

- To put it back on, wrap it using a circular motion, starting from the middle of your calf up to the middle of your thigh.
- Use **light** tension as you wrap your leg. Make sure you do not wrap too tightly because this can effect the blood flow in your foot.

Put an ice pack on your knee for 15 to 20 minutes every hour.

- Do this every day for the first 3 days after your surgery.
- You can use ice packs, frozen vegetables or crushed ice in a plastic bag and wrapped in a thin towel.
- Do not put the ice pack directly on your skin.
- Be careful not to get the tensor and dressing wet.

**If you bought the cold compress cuff**, wear it as much as possible for the first week, and then as needed. Follow the directions that came with the cuff.

**Do not use heat packs on your operated knee.**

## **When can I shower?**

You can take a shower 3 days after your surgery.

- Before you take a shower, remove your knee dressing or tensor. Leave the steri-strips on.
- After you shower, pat the wounds dry with a clean towel. Do not rub the wounds.
- Always keep the wounds clean and dry.

**Do not take baths or go swimming until your surgeon says it's OK.**

## **How do I cope with my pain?**

Pain is normal after this surgery and should get better with time.

Your ice pack or cold compress cuff can also help. After applying gentle pressure on the wound and putting on the clean gauze, put the ice pack or cuff back on the site.

We will give you a prescription for pain medicine. Take it to a pharmacy to get it filled and follow the directions on the bottle.

- Take the medication as soon as you feel pain. Do not wait until the pain gets bad.
- As you have less pain, start to take less pain medicine until you don't need any pain medicine at all.

## **Safely store and dispose of your pain medicine**

Pain medicine that is not stored or disposed of safely could be stolen or taken by mistake.

### **Safe storage**

- Store pain medicine in a locked drawer or cabinet.
- Do not share your pain medicine. Pain medicine prescribed to you can be dangerous to others.

### **Safe disposal**

It is dangerous to keep unused or expired pain medicine that you no longer need.

- Take unused or expired pain medicine to a pharmacy for safe disposal.
- Do not flush medicine down the toilet.
- Do not throw medicine in the garbage.

We may also give you a prescription for the swelling. This is called an **anti-inflammatory**. Fill the prescription at the pharmacy and follow the directions for taking the medicine.

## **What if I am constipated?**

Pain medicine can make you constipated. To help prevent constipation:

- Eat foods high in fibre such as whole grains, vegetables and fruit
- Drink 3 to 5 glasses of liquid each day. Each glass should be about 8 ounces.

If you have not had a bowel movement in 72 hours, take Milk of Magnesia. You can buy this from your pharmacy without a prescription. Follow the directions on the bottle.



## **Watch for these problems**

**Call your surgeon or your family doctor or go to the Toronto Western Hospital emergency department if any of the problems below happen to you.**

**If you are from out of town, go to the nearest emergency department.**

### **Bleeding that doesn't stop**

- A lot of bleeding that soaks through the dressing or tensor and does not stop for 8 hours.

### **A lot of pain**

- Pain that does not get better when you take pain medicine prescribed by your doctor.
- Give the doctor your pharmacy's phone number when you call. The doctor might want to call your pharmacy to change your prescription.

### **Swelling**

- Lower calf is swollen and painful
- Toes feel cool
- Change in the colour of your foot
- Less feeling in your foot
- Can't move your toes

### **Fever**

- Temperature higher than 38 °C or 101 °F
- Increased redness, pain or swelling at the wound
- Yellowish fluid with a bad smell coming from the wound

## When is my follow-up visit?

Your follow-up appointment should be 2 weeks after your surgery. If you do not have a follow-up, call:

- Fracture Clinic  
Fell Pavilion – 1st Floor (Room 577)  
Toronto Western Hospital  
399 Bathurst St.  
Phone: 416 603 5858
- Altum Health: If you are getting follow-up care at Altum Health, they will call you with the date, time and location of your appointment.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

- Dr. Ayeni
- Dr. Dzaja
- Dr. Dessouki
- Dr. Gandhi
- Dr. Kim
- Dr. Leone
- Dr. Mahomed
- Dr. Syed
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

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