

How to Care for Myself After Knee Surgery

Dressing:

- Keep your dressing clean and dry.
- Your dressings include stitches on your skin, steri-strips®, gauze, cotton roll and an ace wrap. Steri-strips® look like small white tapes and are placed right over the incisions. Your surgeon will remove these in the office.
- Your surgeon may have applied a locked knee brace or plaster splint. These are designed to limit your knee motion after surgery. Wear the brace or splint until you return for your first post-operative visit at MedSport.

Weight bearing & exercise:

- **Do not** put any weight on your operative leg. You may touch the foot to the ground with enough pressure to maintain balance.
- Use crutches until your next visit to MedSport.
- Avoid exercising or strenuous activities until you are seen at MedSport.
- Do ankle pump exercises in sets of 25 repetitions 3 times per day starting today. (You will **not** be able to do these if you have a plaster splint).

Blood clot prevention:

- Begin taking an Aspirin each day for 2 weeks as directed. If you are allergic to Aspirin, please discuss this with your surgeon.
- While you are taking aspirin avoid taking OTC anti-inflammatory NSAIDs like ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®, or Naproxen®).
- If we applied white compression stockings wear them for 2 weeks. (You may remove them to shower and care for your legs and feet).
- The ankle pump exercises will also help to improve your circulation and prevent blood clots.

Showering:

- You may remove the dressing to shower in 48-72 hours **if you do not** have a plaster splint. **Do not** take a bath or submerge in water.
- **Do not** shower if your incisions are draining. Call MedSport if you see drainage.
- Steri-strips may get wet with running water. **Do not** soak or scrub them.
- After showering, you can cover your incision with fresh gauze or leave it open to air.
- Your stitches will be removed at MedSport 10 to 14 days after surgery.

Icing:

- Continue to use ice as long as you have pain or swelling.
- Your surgeon may have applied an ice device at the time of surgery. If so, please follow printed instructions for use. You **do not** need to bring the ice device back to MedSport.
- If you use a regular ice pack, leave it on for 20 minutes every hour as often as needed.

Elevation:

- Elevate the knee above the level of your heart to help keep the swelling down.
- To elevate properly: prop pillows under your lower leg. **Do not** place anything behind the knee.

Diet:

- You may want to eat smaller meals for the first 24 hours after surgery to prevent nausea.
- You may progress to your normal diet when you feel ready.
- A high fiber diet will help prevent constipation.
- Drink plenty of fluids

Pain control:

Magnesium:

- You received a prescription for magnesium to help with your pain relief. Take 1 tablet a day while you're taking the narcotic pain medicine.
- Stop taking magnesium if you get loose or runny stools.

Opioids and over-the-counter (OTC) pain medications

You received a prescription for an opioid pain medication (narcotic) today. Take the medication as your doctor prescribed.

- You may begin taking an OTC stool softener to prevent constipation while you are taking the opioid pain medications

Taper off of the opioid as your pain decreases. Tapering means taking the medication less frequently than what your doctor prescribed, until you stop taking the medication all together. To reduce pain and help you taper off the opioid, you can take acetaminophen (Tylenol®) in addition to the opioid, but **you must** make sure you do not exceed the maximum dosage of acetaminophen allowed per day. Check the ingredients of opioid pain medication to see if it contains acetaminophen.

- If your opioid pain medication **does not** contain acetaminophen, you may take it in addition to the prescribed opioid medication (up to 3,000mg per a 24-hour time period)
- If your opioid pain medication contains acetaminophen, add the amount of acetaminophen in your prescription to the amount you are taking with the OTC medication. Make sure you **do not exceed** 3,000mg or 3 grams of acetaminophen in a 24-hour time period.

NSAIDs: (Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs)

- While you are taking aspirin avoid taking OTC anti-inflammatory NSAIDs like ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®, or Naproxen®).

- Ask your surgeon if you may begin NSAIDs at your first clinic appointment.

When do I need to call the doctor?

- ✓ chest pain
- ✓ difficulty breathing
- ✓ calf pain
- ✓ fever above 100.6F
- ✓ intense itching/rash
- ✓ prolonged nausea
- ✓ excessive swelling or bleeding
- ✓ draining incisions after 48-72hrs.
- ✓ redness or sign of a wound infection

How do I contact my doctor?

- Monday-Friday from 8:00AM-5:00PM call MedSport (734) 930-7400, choose option 1.
- At night, weekends, or holidays call the University Hospital Operator (734) 936-6267 ask for the **Orthopedic Surgery Resident** on-call.

Disclaimer: This document contains information and/or instructional materials developed by Michigan Medicine for the typical patient with your condition. It may include links to online content that was not created by Michigan Medicine and for which Michigan Medicine does not assume responsibility. It does not replace medical advice from your health care provider because your experience may differ from that of the typical patient. Talk to your health care provider if you have any questions about this document, your condition or your treatment plan.

Patient Education by [Michigan Medicine](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License](#). Last Revised 08/2018