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## **ACL Reconstruction Post-Operative Instructions**

### **Initial Instructions**

- Ice and elevation along with pain medicine are your keys to initial pain management.
- After you arrive home, rest the remainder of the day. You may be tired or nauseated from the anesthesia and/or pain medication.
- You will be given crutches upon discharge. Continue to use until your first post-op visit.
- If you were fit for, supplied with, or directed to use a brace, be sure to use it as directed.

### **Dressing Change**

- Leave the dressing in place for 48 hours following surgery.
- After this, remove the dressing making sure to leave the steri-strip tape on the incisions in place.
  - The steri strips will stay in place for 1 ½ to 2 weeks before falling off on their own.
  - The tails of the sutures may be visible beyond the strips. **DO NOT CUT OR PULL THE SUTURES.** These will be removed at the appropriate time by the physician.
- You may now apply a new, clean, dry dressing at least once a day.
  - Place sterile gauze over the incisions and then wrap the knee with an ACE™ bandage.
- It is extremely important to keep the surgical site clean and dry at all times to help prevent infection.
- Signs of infection include redness, swelling, increased pain, warmth, fever (above 101.4 degrees F) and drainage from the wound. If you note any of these signs, please call the office immediately at 713-486-1820.

### **Bathing**

- You may shower 48 hours after your surgery and get your incisions wet.
  - Let the water run down over the incisions but do not rub or scrub them.
- Do not soak or submerge the surgical site for at least 3 weeks following surgery.

### **Activity**

- Rest and elevate your leg for the first 24 hours.
  - Use a pillow under your calf and ankle. Never place a pillow under your knee or heel.
- Use your crutches while walking. You are to be partial weight bearing on your leg as you feel comfortable while wearing the brace provided.
- It is very important to get your leg as straight as possible, as soon as possible.
- Physical therapy will be arranged and your first session will be the day following your surgery.
  - They will guide you in exercises to perform while in the clinic and at home.

## Bracing

- You will be put in a hinged knee brace after surgery.
- You are to remain in the brace at all times except to shower until instructed otherwise by your therapist or physician.
- The brace will be locked in full extension following surgery. This should not be adjusted unless you are instructed to do so.

## Cryotherapy

- Icing is very important to decrease swelling and pain, and improve mobility.
- You will be provided with a cryocuff.
  - Keep cold therapy cuff on at all times for the first 24 hours after surgery.
  - Refill with cold water every hour while awake.
  - After 24 hours, continue to use the cuff 3-4 times a day, 15-20 minutes each time.
  - Be sure to keep clothing or a towel between ice and skin, as placing the ice directly on skin may cause frostbite. **DO NOT PLACE DIRECTLY ON SKIN.**
- If a cryocuff is not provided, please use ice for 20 minutes each hour over surgical site. **DO NOT PLACE DIRECTLY ON SKIN.**

## Medications

- You will be given a narcotic pain medication. This should be taken as needed every 4-6 hours for pain. Take with a little food.
- We recommend purchasing an over-the-counter stool softener (such as colace) to take as directed while taking narcotics to prevent constipation.
- If given a prescription for an anti-inflammatory, such as Motrin or Naproxen take as directed. Take with food.

## Femoral Nerve Block

- You may have received an injection into your upper thigh to block the conduction of your femoral nerve. This nerve conducts pain and activates your quadriceps muscles.
- Therefore you should be relatively pain free for about 12-18 hours but may NOT be able to contract your quadriceps muscles. This will allow you to have very little control of your leg.
- If you were given a brace, you must wear it and use crutches until advised by your physician.
- The anesthesiologist will discuss this procedure in more detail with you on the day of surgery.

## Post-Op Office Appointment

- If the appointment was not arranged prior to surgery, please contact the office at 713-486-1820.

## Emergencies or Concerns

- Contact us at 713-486-1820 or go to the nearest emergency room.
  - Pain worsens or does not go away after pain medication is taken.
  - Redness or swelling in your thigh or calf that will not decrease.
  - Difficulties moving your toes.
  - Develop a fever greater than 101.4 degrees.
- Please note that refills on pain medication will not be approved during evenings or on weekends.