

Patient Information

Physiotherapy - Orthopaedics

Complex knee surgery

What to expect after surgery

Pain and swelling management

A nerve block may be used during the operation which means that right after the operation your knee and leg may feel heavy and numb for a few hours. When the nerve block is wearing off you will be given painkillers. Please take them as you are advised. You may have some discomfort for several weeks after the surgery but taking your prescribed painkillers regularly for the first few weeks will make you more comfortable and allow you to do your exercises.

You must rest, ice and raise your leg to reduce the pain and swelling around your knee.

Raise your leg in a straight position and with the whole leg supported (see image).

Use an ice pack wrapped in a cloth to protect your skin, and place it on your knee for 20 minutes at a time. Do this every couple of hours.



Wound

Your knee will be bandaged; this is removed 24 hours after surgery leaving the smaller dressings which cover your wounds. If you have stitches, you will be given instructions by the nursing staff for their removal at your GP surgery. They will also give you the information regarding general wound care.



Patient Information

Knee Brace

If you require a knee brace after your surgery then your physiotherapist will fit it and show you how to use it.

You are allowed to move your knee between degrees for weeks.

Please refer to your brace information sheet for the brace settings when mobilising and at rest, and how to use the brace.

Mobilisation

You will be weight bearing for weeks.

You will be taught how to use crutches by the physiotherapist.

Exercises

The success of your operation will often depend on you following your rehabilitation guide.

Although your knee may feel sore after the operation it is important that you start completing the exercises in order to build up the muscles around your knee, and to regain the range of movement after the surgery.

Before being discharged you will be seen by a physiotherapist who will explain and find which exercises from the list below you need to complete. Please make sure you only complete the selected exercises.

Complete the selected exercises times a day.

The exercises are split into 3 sections and it is important that you complete all of the exercises selected for you, as they will help you to work towards achieving your rehab goals. If you have a brace, all exercises should be completed whilst wearing the brace unless your therapist has told you otherwise.

Patient Information

Prevention exercises – to prevent chest infections and blood clots post op

Deep breathing exercises

Complete these hourly

Take a deep breath in through your nose, hold for a couple of seconds and then breathe out through your mouth. Repeat this 3 times.

Foot and ankle exercises

Complete these hourly

Move your ankles up and down fairly quickly for 10 seconds. Then complete circles one way for 10 seconds, and circles the other way for 10 seconds.



Static glutes

Repeat 10 times

Squeeze your buttocks together and hold for 10 seconds.

Try to make sure the thighs stay relaxed and only your bottom muscles are working.



Patient Information

Knee Rehabilitation

Early exercises

Static quadriceps

Repeat 10 times

Lie on your back with your knee straight. Pull your toes up towards you, push your heel away and tighten the muscles in your thigh. Hold for 10 seconds.

During this exercise, you should feel your patella (kneecap) move upwards towards your hip. Due to the location of your surgery, this may feel uncomfortable but it is important to remember you will not be doing your knee any harm.



Heel Props

Rest your heel on a rolled towel or 2 pillows so that your knee is not supported and there is a gap between your calf and the bed. Allow knee to straighten in this position for 2 minutes. As your knee becomes more comfortable build up the time towards 10 minutes.



Patient Information

Active assisted knee flexion and extension **Repeat 10 times**

Lie or sit on the bed with your leg extended out in front of you. Place a plastic bag, or something to help your foot slide, underneath your heel. Using your hands to support around your thigh, bend your knee by drawing your heel towards your bottom. Fully straighten your knee after each repetition.

You can also complete this exercise in the chair.



Patella (kneecap) glides **Repeat 10 times in each direction**

Sit on the edge of a chair with your leg out straight, heel on the floor and your muscles relaxed.

Hold your knee cap as in the picture below.

Push the knee cap

- towards your other knee,
- outwards away from the other knee,
- down towards your toes
- up towards your hip.

You may hear or feel the kneecap click or clunk, this is normal and safe. The glides may be difficult initially due to swelling and the wound dressings. Keep your leg relaxed and make sure that you are moving your kneecap not just your skin.



Patient Information

Further exercises

Static hamstrings

Repeat 10 times

Lie on your back with your knee slightly bent. Push down firmly into the bed with your heel. Hold for 5 seconds.



Straight leg raise

Repeat 10 times

Lie on the bed with your knee straight. Pull your toes up towards you, push your heel away and tighten the muscles in your thigh. Then try to lift your whole leg up like a rod off the bed by about 20cm. Hold for 5 seconds and slowly return to the start position.



Calf Stretch

Repeat 3 times

Lie on the bed with your knee straight. Loop a strap/towel/belt around your foot; pull the ends of the strap towards you until you feel a stretch. Hold for 30 seconds then release. You can increase the stretch by pulling harder if you need to.



Patient Information

Scar Massage

It is important to start (as soon as able) to massage your scar to help prevent it becoming too sensitive and painful to complete exercise. Your Physiotherapist will advise you when to begin this exercise.

Discharge

You are usually able to go home the day after your operation. You will need to arrange for someone to drive you home and must have a responsible adult with you for the first 24hrs.

Physiotherapy is essential after your operation and you will be contacted by your local physiotherapy department for an urgent physiotherapy appointment. If you have not heard from outpatient physiotherapy within one week, please contact the department (details in next section).

If you have any concerns regarding your wound and it:

- Becomes Red or inflamed (swollen or hot to touch)
- Begins to ooze or discharge
- Begins to bleed
- Starts to smell

Please use this number to leave a message 02476 968333. Any messages will be picked Mon-Fri 07:30-17:30 Sat-Sun 07:30-13:30.

For out of hours support you will need to go to A&E or the Urgent Treatment Centre.

Further Information

If you have any queries or concerns about your physiotherapy please telephone the Orthopaedic Therapy Department between 08:00 and 17:00:

Rugby St Cross: 01788 663054

University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire: 02476 965106

Patient Information

Or Therapy Outpatient Department between 08:30 and 16:30 Monday to Friday:

Rugby St Cross: 01788 663257

University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire: 024 7696 6013

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