

## Physiotherapy

# Posterior cruciate ligament (PCL) reconstruction exercises

A PCL reconstruction is performed to restore stability in the knee. It aims to stop the shin bone (tibia) from moving too far backwards on the thigh bone (femur). Whilst your reconstruction is healing, a brace is needed to support it in the correct position.

### After surgery

A nerve block may be used during the operation. So, immediately after the operation, your knee and leg may feel heavy and numb for a few hours.

While the block is wearing off, you'll be given painkillers. Please take them as advised.

You may have some discomfort for several weeks after the surgery. Take your prescribed painkillers regularly for the first few weeks after surgery. This will make you feel more comfortable and allow you to do your exercises.

To reduce the pain and swelling around your knee:

- rest
- raise your leg in a straight position with the whole leg supported
- use an ice pack or ice wrapped in a cloth on your knee for 20 minutes at a time - try to do this every 2 hours



## Patient Information

### **Wound**

It's normal for your knee to be swollen after the operation. You could have a lot of bruising. You'll be encouraged to use icepacks regularly at home, especially after doing your exercises.

You need to take the big bandage off your knee the day after your operation. Underneath you'll find adhesive dressings over the wound. Do not remove the adhesive dressings.

You'll receive an appointment to attend the Ligament Review Clinic after 2 weeks at the Hospital of St Cross, Rugby. Here, these dressings will be removed and your knee will be checked. Keep the wounds dry until this appointment.

You'll have an appointment with the surgical team at 6 to 8 weeks after surgery.

### **PTS and dynamic PCL brace**

Wear your PTS brace (knee splint) day and night for 2 weeks. The splint can be removed for initial movement exercises and washing your leg only.

At 2 weeks, or once the swelling in your knee has settled to normal levels, the PTS brace is changed to a dynamic PCL brace. This may be fitted at the Ligament Review Clinic, or an appointment will be made for you for the brace to be fitted.

The dynamic PCL brace must be worn day and night until 12 weeks. Then, wear the brace during the day for up to 6 months, as advised by your consultant.

## Patient Information

### Weight bearing

- For the first 2 weeks, partial weight bearing using elbow crutches with the PTS brace.
- Between 2 and 6 weeks, partial weight bearing using elbow crutches with Dynamic PCL brace.
- Aim to be fully weight bearing by 8 weeks with Dynamic PCL brace.

### Exercises

The success of your operation will depend on you following the rehabilitation guidance given to you by the physiotherapist.

Although your knee may be sore after the operation, start these exercises to make sure you progress as expected.

Please complete these exercises 5 times daily unless stated otherwise.

### Deep breathing exercises

- A. Take a deep breath in through your nose.
- B. Hold for a couple of seconds, and then breathe out through your mouth.
- C. Repeat this 3 times. Complete this exercise every hour.

### Foot and ankle exercises



- A. Pump your ankles up and down for 10 seconds.
- B. Circle your ankles one way for 10 seconds. Then, circle your ankles the other way for 10 seconds.
- C. Complete this exercise every hour.

## Patient Information

### Static glutes



- A. Squeeze your buttocks together and hold for 10 seconds.
- B. Make sure your thighs stay relaxed and only your bottom muscles are working.
- C. Repeat 10 times.

### Static quadriceps (knee bracing)

You may find this exercise uncomfortable. However, it's important to remember you won't be doing your knee any harm.



- A. Lie on your back.
- B. Straighten your knee and tighten the muscle on the front of your thigh.
- C. Hold for 10 seconds, then relax. Repeat 10 times.

During this exercise, you should feel your kneecap move upwards towards your hip.

## Patient Information

### Assisted passive knee flexion (bending)



- A. Lie down on your side.
- B. Place a plastic bag, or something underneath your leg to help it slide.
- C. Use your hands to help slide your knee up towards your chest and then slide it back to the starting position (as shown).
- D. Do not use your muscles to help bend your knee - this can stretch the new ligament.
- E. Repeat 10 times.

### How much to bend your knee when doing assisted passive knee flexion

- No active hamstring exercise for 6 weeks.
- Weeks 0-2 bend knee as pain allows 2-4 times per day.
- Weeks 2-6 aim to achieve 90 degrees of flexion by 6 weeks.
- Week 7 onward build to full flexion.

## Patient Information

### Kneecap glides



- A. Sit on the edge of a chair with your leg out straight, heel on the floor, and your muscles relaxed.
- B. Hold your kneecap. Gently push your kneecap over towards your other knee, outwards away from the other knee, down towards your toes and up towards your hip.
- C. Repeat 10 times.

You may hear or feel your kneecap click or clunk. This is normal and safe. You may find the glides difficult at first due to swelling and the wound dressings.

Keep your leg relaxed. Make sure that you are moving your kneecap and not just your skin.

### Discharge

You'll be discharged when your doctor and physiotherapist have assessed you as medically and physically fit for home.

Arrange for someone to drive you home. Have a responsible adult stay with you for the first 24 hours.

## Patient Information

### Follow up

Physiotherapy is essential after the operation. You'll be contacted with an urgent outpatient physiotherapy appointment after you're discharged.

Please contact the physiotherapy department if you do not have information about this appointment after 1 week.

Clinic appointments with the surgical team are usually at 2, 6, and 12 weeks, then at 6 and 9 months, depending on your needs.

### More information

Call your consultant's secretary if your wound:

- becomes red or inflamed
- starts to ooze or discharge
- starts to bleed
- starts to smell

For out-of-hours help, go to A&E or the Urgent Treatment Centre.

If you have any questions or worries about your physiotherapy, please call the Orthopaedic Therapy Department between 8am and 5pm.

Images taken within the Trust.

### Contact details

#### Consultant's secretaries

Mr P Thompson	024 7696 5097
Mr A Metcalfe	024 7696 5064
Mr F Shah	024 7696 5096
Mr N Smith	024 7696 5080
Mr D Ramoutar	024 7696 5079

## Patient Information

### **Orthopaedic Therapy Department, 8am to 5pm**

Rugby St Cross: 01788 663054

University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire 024 7696 5106

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