

COMMON QUESTIONS REGARDING TOTAL KNEE REPLACEMENT SURGERY

How long do I need to use my walker/crutches? You need to use them for six weeks following surgery. You can put full weight on your knee replacement after surgery.

When do I go to a cane? You will go to a cane six weeks from the date of surgery. If you had a right knee replacement, you would use the cane in your left hand and vice versa.

May I put a pillow underneath my operated knee? You may put a pillow underneath your lower leg or ankle, that will help straighten your knee, but do not put a pillow under your knee as this will promote a contracture of your knee in bending, and we are trying to eliminate that.

Why does my knee click? Your total knee consists of a juncture between plastic and metal. These surfaces can produce a clicking sensation. This is not uncommon. We would estimate that approximately one-quarter of the patients will have some clicking in their knee that they may or may not recognize. As you become stronger and the muscles become more coordinated with your walking, this usually is eliminated. It may persist, but just as it is true that people who live near the railroad tracks eventually stop hearing the train, you eventually will get used to this noise.

Do I need to apply ice packs to my knee after surgery? Icing of your knee will help prevent and control both swelling and pain in your knee, mostly for the first 48 hours. After that, you might want to use ice for a few weeks as some people feel that it helps them with their discomfort. As a general rule of thumb, keep the ice on for no more than 15 minutes and use it about four times a day.

When can I get into the pool? You can go into the pool when your wound is dry and clean and you have good control of your leg. The physical therapist can help to make that decision. Typically, we would let people in the pool as early as five to seven days if the wound is dry and clean.

When can I drive a car? This is a legal issue. You cannot drive until you can handle your vehicle safely in an emergency situation. I would not suggest that you drive a vehicle in less than four to six weeks from the date of surgery.

What if I have trouble sleeping? You can purchase Benadryl over-the-counter or you can use some of the readily available over-the-counter sleeping aids. We do not recommend stronger prescription medication. If this does not work, please contact your internist and see if they can help you to prescribe a prescription sleep aid. Typically, as people become more active, this is not a problem.

How long do I need to take my iron pill? Typically, we would like patients to take their iron for four to six weeks after the surgery, and this will help to build up their blood count. If nausea or constipation is a problem, you can take the pill every second or third day. Iron may cause constipation, and it may make your stools turn black.

How long do I need to take my blood thinner? Coumadin is typically taken for one month. Aspirin is taken for one month, as well. Lovenox is taken for seven to ten days, and this is administered by a painless shot in the tissue of the stomach just underneath the skin. While you are on blood thinners, you will have blood drawn by the home healthcare agency every week to check levels of your blood thinner and/or your blood count.

How do I take care of my wound after the staples are out? You may wash your wound right away after your staples are removed. You can remove the Steri-Strips anytime you wish. They easily peel off within a few days. You can apply vitamin E to the wound daily after the staples are removed. Notify us right away if there is any wound drainage.

What about handicap parking stickers? We would be glad to give you a temporary handicap sticker for three months for one time only. A total knee replacement rarely warrants a permanent handicap sticker.

How soon can I play golf? More than likely, we will have you wait approximately three to four months after the surgery. Some people need longer, but typically, it is perfectly fine to play golf at that time. We would recommend that you start with putting and chipping, proceeding to pitch shots with less than a full swing and then moving up to a full swing. You might find it helpful to turn your foot out slightly at address position on the knee that has been replaced as this will take a little strain off that knee.

Who prescribes my medications? Any medication not prescribed by this office should be directed to the physician who prescribed it initially. We do not manage high blood pressure, heart disease, etc.