

ACL Reconstruction Helpful Hints & Important Precautions

Diet

- You may resume clear liquids and light foods after surgery (jello, soup, etc.)
- Progress to your normal diet as tolerated as long as you are not nauseated.

Medications:

- NSAID's must be stopped 7 days prior to surgery.
- Before surgery you will likely receive a nerve block that will last about 8 to 12 hours, and in addition during surgery I will often inject a numbing medicine like novocaine that will give some pain relief for several hours after surgery. It is important to begin taking your pain pills before this medicine wears off.
- This first medication I use is Oxycodone, which is a strong narcotic pain medication. It will begin to work within 15 minutes after taking it with a maximal effect in one to 2 hours. Normally, Oxycodone is taken every 6 hours but if the pain is severe, it can be used every 4 hours.
- Common side effects of the medications are nausea, constipation, itching, and drowsiness.
- The best way to prevent nausea is to take the medicine with a little food, start with just one pill, and be patient while the medicine begins to work. Usually, after the first few doses the nausea will go away. I also prescribe an anti-nausea medication called Zofran (Ondansetron) to be taken if you have persistent nausea after surgery.
- I strongly recommend you take an over-the-counter stool softener such as Colace or eat a homeopathic diet heavy in high fiber fruits such as prunes to avoid constipation.
- You will be given 24 hours of oral antibiotics. Take these with food. You will be told when to start these when you leave the surgery center, usually at dinner when you get home.
- Take Benadryl one half hour before your narcotic if you experience itching.
- Do not drive or operate heavy machinery while taking Oxycodone or other narcotics.
- You should take 325 mg enteric-coated aspirin once a day for 6 weeks to help prevent blood clot formation. Stop taking the aspirin if you have any GI side effects or bleeding and let your doctor know immediately.
- You may transition to Tylenol as your pain subsides, but do not take while you are taking Oxycodone as Oxycodone has 325 mg of Tylenol in each pill. Patients with normal liver function should not consume more than 4000 mg of Tylenol per day.
- You can also supplement your pain medication with NSAIDS (Aleve, Advil, etc).

Bandages & Sling:

- Your postoperative dressing has two layers you need to understand in order to properly care for your surgery site. Your incisions were closed with absorbable stitches that are covered with small white tapes called Steri-Strips. Your Steri-Strips should be left in place until I see you at your first post-operative date. You also may have some black stitches called nylon, which should also be left, in place.
- The second layer is a large white fluffy dressing that is loosely held in place with tape and the overlying compression stocking.
- As the surgery is done arthroscopically and water is used, occasionally there will be a small amount of blood mixed with water in this dressing. This is nothing to worry about;

however, if you see a lot of bleeding, please call Dr Raphael. Leave the dressing on until seen by Dr. Raphael.

- Keep an ABD dressing over the incision at all times to avoid the brace irritating the skin around the incision.
- Keep the compression stocking on at all times until the first post-operative visit.

Washing & Bathing:

- You should be careful to keep the wound clean and dry for the first 72 hours after surgery.
- Beginning on the third day after surgery it is okay to shower as long as the incisions are kept dry with plastic wrap. Remove the wrap after showering and replace your compressive stocking.
- Do not take a bath until 2 weeks after surgery and after the first post-operative visit.
- Do not go into a pool, lake or ocean until 4 weeks after surgery.

Ice & Activity:

- One important goal following surgery is to minimize swelling around your surgery site. The best way to achieve this is with the frequent application of ice. You will likely have an ice machine provided by a vendor. This is most important the first 48 hours following surgery. If you don't have an ice machine, use a large ice pack (like a big zip-lock bag or bag of peas) and held firmly on the area of your surgery. Apply for 15 minutes every hour while awake if possible, and DO NOT put ice directly on your skin.
- Crutches will be given to you before surgery if you do not have them already. Use the crutches at all time before the first visit if you are up walking.
- You will have a brace locked in full extension (straight out). Do not change the hinge settings until directed by Dr. Raphael. Keep the brace on at all times except while showering, icing your knee, during towel roll exercises, or during range of motion exercises.
- You may put weight on the operated leg as tolerated unless directed by Dr. Raphael.
- Do not place pillows under the operated knee as this can lead to stiffness.
- You may return to sedentary work only or school in 3-7 days after surgery if your pain is tolerable.
- Avoid long distance traveling in cars or by airplane during the two weeks after surgery to avoid increasing your risk of developing blood clots.

Exercises

- Place a towel roll under you ankle and tighten your thigh muscles to get your knee to straighten out. This is very important and should be done at least four times a day.
- Move your ankle back and forth many times during the day to help your circulation.

Physical Therapy

- The goal of physical therapy is to first assess how your body responded to the surgical procedure. They help you feel comfortable with your surgery and make sure you aren't afraid to start doing things. Your therapist will start range of motion and strength exercises on your first visit. You will start physical therapy after your first post-operative visit.

Follow up appointment:

- We try to give all of our patients a follow-up office visit at the same time we schedule your surgery.
- Typically I want to see my patients in the office 5 to 10 days after surgery.

FOLLOW UP APPOINTMENT: Please call our office to confirm your scheduled appointment.

What to watch out for:

- ∞ Pain that is increasing every hour in spite of the pain medication
- ∞ Drainage from the wound more than 2 days after surgery
- ∞ Increasing redness around the surgical site
- ∞ Pain or swelling around your surgery
- ∞ Fever greater than 101.5 degrees.
- ∞ Unable to keep food or water down for more than one day