

POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS ACL RECONSTRUCTION

MEDICATION

- Two pain medications (Percocet 5/325 mg, or Tramadol 50 mg) will be prescribed to you. Take as instructed and as needed.
 - **Pain medication may cause constipation.** You may take an over the counter stool softener (Colace, Senekot, etc) to help prevent this problem.
 - You should take these medicines with food or they may nauseate you.
 - You may not drive or operate heavy equipment while on narcotics
 - Pain medication is refilled on an individual basis and only during office hours.
 - You may be referred to pain management either pre-operatively or post-operatively.
- If you have a nerve block, **DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE BLOCK COMPLETELY WEARS OFF.**
 - Most patients find it helpful to take two pills 8-10 hours after surgery and scheduling two pills every four to six hours the first night and morning after and then gradually wean off as tolerated.
- Try to avoid anti-inflammatories such as Ibuprofen or Naproxen for at least six weeks after surgery as this may impair tissue healing.
- Take one regular aspirin (325 mg) once a day for 10 days beginning the day after surgery unless you are allergic, have been prescribed another blood thinner or have a history of stomach ulcers. If you normally take a blood thinner, resume that as prescribed by your primary care physician.
- **Resume all home medications unless otherwise instructed.**
- Call immediately to the office if you are having an adverse reaction to the medicine.

WOUND CARE

- Do not remove or unwrap your dressings. This is to help keep the wounds clean and decrease the chance of infection.
- Dressings will be changed on your first post-operative visit and a new dressing applied. If they get **EXCESSIVELY** wet prior to this, meaning “soaked through,” contact the office.
- Until your first post-op visit, wrap the leg, **WITH BRACE**, in a large plastic garbage bag with tape at both ends to shower or bathe.
 - Dr. Toole will instruct you when you may shower without the brace on.
- Continue to use the bag, plastic wrap or waterproof bandages to keep incisions dry for at least 2 weeks after surgery.
- **NO** submersion of wounds (bath, hot tub, pool) is allowed until a minimum of 3 weeks after surgery.

CRUTCHES

- You may place **FULL WEIGHT OR TOE TOUCH WEIGHT WITH YOUR CRUTCHES** on the involved leg depending on additional procedures that need to be performed when comfortable, unless instructed otherwise after surgery to help with balance and stability.
- Crutches will be needed until physical therapy and Dr. Toole deem them unnecessary based on strength in the involved leg and you can walk with a normal gait.

BRACE

- The post-operative brace, locked in full extension, is to be worn at all times including sleep.
- The brace is necessary for even the simplest tasks such as going to the restroom to protect your knee while your muscles are weak.
- The brace is generally allowed to bend after the first post-op visit and is used 4-6 weeks, depending on your procedure. Instructions may change with additional procedures.

EXERCISE

- Physical Therapy is a key component of recovery and should start within 1-3 days after surgery. This appointment should be made before surgery to ensure you begin therapy on time. If you have difficulty doing this, contact the office for assistance.
- Regaining full extension quickly is critical to your recovery. **DO NOT** keep pillows under your knee leaving your knee in a bent position.
- A handout of exercises will be provided immediately after surgery that you may begin as soon as you are comfortable.

SLEEP

- Nighttime will probably be the most uncomfortable time.
- You should sleep in your post-op brace until your first post-op visit where you will get additional instructions depending on your progress.
- You may slightly loosen the straps to aid in sleeping if you feel they are tight.

COLD THERAPY

- Ice should be used for comfort and swelling. Use it at least 20 minutes at a time. Many patients use it an hour on then an hour off while awake for the first day or two.
- **Never apply directly to exposed skin. Place a dish-towel or t-shirt between your skin and the ice.**
- After the two days, use 20-30 minutes every 3-4 hours if possible.
- A simple bag of frozen peas may be used as an inexpensive ice pack. Buy several bags of peas, place in a gallon size zip-lock bag making them about an inch thick and removing as much air as possible. Return to freezer, lying flat when done.
- **If you have a cryotherapy machine, use as prescribed according to the instructions.**

BRUISING

- The lower leg may become swollen and bruised, which is normal. This is from the fluid and blood moving down the leg and should resolve in 10-14 days.
- Elevate your leg above heart level to help assist in decreasing swelling.

- **If you experience severe calf pain and swelling, call the office immediately.**

EMERGENCIES

- If you have an emergency contact Dr. Toole's office.
- Contact the office if you notice any of the following:
 - Uncontrolled nausea or vomiting, reaction to medication, inability to urinate, fever greater than 101.5 (low grade fevers 1-2 days after surgery is normal), severe pain not relieved by pain medication, redness or continued drainage around incisions (a small amount is normal), calf pain or severe swelling.
- **If you are having chest pain or difficulty breathing, call 911 or go to the closest emergency room.**

DENTAL WORK

- If you need dental work within six weeks after surgery please contact the office for instructions.

FOLLOW UP APPOINTMENT

- Please make your first post-op visit 7 days after surgery if not already scheduled.
- **If you have any questions, please call the office.**