

ACL RECONSTRUCTION - POST OPERATIVE INSTRUCTION SHEET

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Dressings

Your wounds will be usually closed with dissolving stitches. These wounds are usually covered with a combination of mesh, glue and dressing. Covering all of this will be an outer compression bandage which should be removed the day after your surgery (this can be cut or unwrapped). Please keep the inner dressings dry and intact if possible - this may require a plastic bag or gladwrap in the shower. To minimize the risk of infection these dressings should not be changed unless compromised (some dried blood/ooze is normal but please contact the office if there is any fresh discharge).

Pain

The level of pain after your surgery should be at the level of a moderate ache. You will be given a script for pain medication by the anaesthetist - please take this as instructed. If your pain is not controlled by this medication, please call the rooms on 1800553335 (or local Emergency Department if after hours).

Things To Watch Out For

ACL reconstruction has a low complication rate but very occasionally excessive swelling, infection or blood clots (DVT) can occur. Antibiotics and blood thinners are not routinely prescribed following ACL surgery. Please seek medical care if you experience a sudden increase in pain (both in the calf and knee), shortness of breath, swelling, redness, fevers or discharge from the wound. During business hours please call the rooms on 1800553335 and after hours please call the Emergency Department of your local public hospital.

Physical Activity After Your ACL Reconstruction

1. Walking And Daily Activities

Most patients will walk out of hospital after their ACL reconstruction with crutches. You may weight bear on the operated leg as much as your pain tolerates (unless you have had a meniscal **repair** in which case you will be in a brace and only touch weight bearing). Before your first post-operative visit, please try to avoid prolonged periods of standing, walking or sitting with a bent knee (e.g. long car trips). Otherwise try to go about your activities of daily living as your pain tolerates.

2. Swelling Control

The first priority in the recovery process is to reduce the swelling in your knee and this can take a several weeks to settle. Icing your knee (20 minutes every 3-4 hours) and elevating your leg above the level of your heart can help with this.

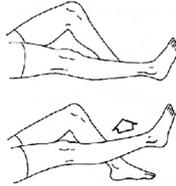
3. Driving

You cannot resume driving until you can safely control a car. This may take a week or two - if in doubt please wait until your first post-operative visit.

4. Exercises

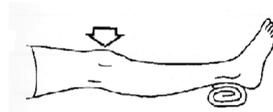
Before your first post-operative visit, you should perform some simple exercises everyday which are aimed at maintaining your muscle strength and knee range of motion. Please do as many sets (up to 5) of 10 repetitions as your pain and swelling tolerates. Formal physiotherapy should commence as soon as your pain and swelling allows - this may be before or after your first post-operative visit.

a) Straight Leg Raises



Lie on your back with your other knee bent. Keeping your leg straight and toes pointed to the ceiling, lift your leg about 30 cm off the ground and hold for 5 seconds. Lower gently and repeat. You should feel the muscles at the front of your thigh contracting.

b) Knee Extension



Lie on your back with a small rolled towel under your ankle. Push your ankle down into the roll which will make your knee straighten. Hold for 5 seconds then relax and repeat. **Regaining full extension early** is important to your recovery – please do not put any pillows under your knee (instead put them under your heel).

c) Knee Flexion



Apart from the above exercises, it is also important to bend your knee until you can feel a stretch (but not excessive pain). This is often easier sitting on a high chair or stool. You may find your knee to be quite stiff initially but you should make steady progress as your swelling comes down.

You should feel stretching but not pain with these exercises. You may need to ice your knee and elevate your leg afterwards if there is swelling. Avoid any exercise or activity which involves excessive weight or undue force.

Follow Up

Please call the rooms on 1800553335 to schedule an appointment 10-14 days after your surgery.