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Post-Operative Instructions: Anterior Cruciate Ligament Reconstruction

Activity

- Rest the day of surgery.
- Crutches or a cane will likely be necessary after the procedure to assist in ambulation. Dr. Alaia will discuss with you whether or not you may put weight on the leg.
- You will have a brace on your leg. It must remain in place and locked in full extension.
- If you have obtained an ice machine/cryo-cuff, please discuss the instructions for use with the representative, and use it during the first week. You may also choose to use an ice pack to control pain and swelling. If so, do not put it directly on the skin. Apply for 20 minutes, three times a day.
- You may return to work when cleared by Dr. Alaia to do so. Lifting heavy weight is strictly prohibited unless allowed by the surgeon.
- Do not drive until cleared by Dr. Alaia to do so. You will discuss this with him on your first post-operative visit.
- It is important that for the first week, if you are in a seated or laying position, you should have the operated leg elevated to reduce swelling in the leg.

Pain Medication

- Pain is common post-operatively.
- Your narcotic pain medication prescribed for you should be started immediately after your surgery. You may take 1-2 tablets every four hours as needed for pain.
- Take your pain medication *regularly* for the first 2-3 days after surgery (even if your pain is mild) in order to avoid rebound pain. Then, wean yourself to an “as needed” dosing regimen.
- Constipation is a common side effect from narcotic pain medication. Over the counter Miralax (Polyethylene Glycol) can alleviate this symptom.
- If you have any side effects from a medication we have prescribed, discontinue its use and call our office.
- Do not drink alcoholic beverages while taking narcotic pain medications.

Physical Therapy

- You will begin physical therapy at a time dictated by the physician, depending on the type of procedures that were performed.

Showering/Dressings/Incisions

- Do not remove the dressing for the first 7 days after surgery. You may take the brace off for showering ***but it is important not to get the dressing OR the incision wet.*** You may either place a plastic bag or a waterproof dressing over the bandage while showering.
- After the dressing is removed by the doctor, ***do NOT*** scrub the surgical incisions until they are fully healed. Use soap on your thighs and let the soapy water run down onto the knee.
- When done showering, pat the incisions dry with a towel and again, do not scrub. You may then apply band-aids and reapply an ACE bandage snugly over this. At this point you do not need to reapply the gauze pads however you must put the brace back on.
- It may be helpful to obtain a shower seat to assist in the showering process post-operatively. Be careful not to slip and fall, and keep the knee straight.
- ***Do not bathe or swim for the first 3-4 weeks*** unless directed to do so by the physician.
- Your stitches will be removed at the first follow-up, typically between 7 and 10 days from the procedure.
- If Steri-Strips have been placed, these will fall off on their own and you do not need to worry about re-applying them.
- Swelling in the knee is normal after the procedure, as distention of the knee with water is important in performing the procedure. This should resolve on its own.
- You may also have some bruising in the leg after the procedure; do not be alarmed if this travels down the leg as may be expected as a result of gravity.

Follow-up

- Please call the office to arrange the follow-up visit. You should be seen between 7 and 10 days from the initial surgery unless otherwise instructed by the doctor.
- Call the office if you develop any of the following:
 - Fever > 101.0 degrees Fahrenheit
 - If the skin around the incisions becomes very red or develops a discharge
 - If you develop difficulty breathing or chest pain, report to your local emergency room.