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# Discharge Instructions for Knee Arthroscopy

You had knee arthroscopy. This procedure uses small cuts (incisions) to find, identify, and treat problems inside the knee. These problems include loose bodies, meniscal tears, bone spurs, osteochondritis dissecans (OCD), and synovitis. Below are tips to help speed your recovery from surgery.

## Activity

- Don't drive until your healthcare provider says it's OK. And never drive while taking opioid pain medicine.
- Remember to take pain medicines as directed. Don't wait for the pain to get bad. And don't drink alcohol while taking pain medicines.
- Follow weight-bearing instructions given by your healthcare provider. They may require you to use crutches to keep weight off your knee.
- Unless your healthcare provider tells you otherwise, start using the affected knee 3 days after surgery.
- Slowly bend and straighten your affected leg as far as you can, unless your provider tells you otherwise. Do this several times a day.
- Rest your knee by lying down and putting pillows under it for the first 3 days after surgery. Keep your ankle elevated above the level of your heart. This helps keep swelling down.
- Follow your provider's instructions about wearing and caring for a brace, immobilizer, or elastic dressing.
- Point and flex your foot and rotate your ankle as much as possible during the first few weeks after surgery. Also wiggle your toes as much as possible.

## Incision care

- Check your incision daily for redness, tenderness, or drainage.
- Don't be alarmed if there is some bruising, slight swelling of the knee, or a small amount of blood on the bandage.
- Adjust the bandage or brace as needed. It should feel supportive on your knee, but not too tight.
- Don't soak your incision in water (no hot tubs, bathtubs, swimming pools) until your healthcare provider says it's OK.
- Wait 2 days after your surgery to start showering. Then shower as needed. Cover your knee with plastic and seal with tape to keep the dressing or brace dry. Once your dressing is removed, follow your healthcare provider's instructions for care of the wound. And sit on a shower stool so that you don't fall while showering.

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- Use an ice pack or bag of frozen peas—or something similar—wrapped in a thin towel to reduce the swelling. Keep the foot elevated while you ice the knee. Apply the ice pack for 20 minutes. Then remove it for 20 minutes. Repeat as needed. Icing helps reduce swelling.

## Other precautions

- Arrange your household to keep the items you need within reach.
- Remove throw rugs, electrical cords, and anything else that may cause you to fall.
- Use nonslip bath mats, grab bars, an elevated toilet seat, and a shower chair in your bathroom.
- Use a cane, crutches, a walker, or handrails until your balance, flexibility, and strength improve, and you can put weight on your leg. And remember to ask for help from others when you need it.
- Free up your hands so that you can use them to keep balance. Use a fanny pack, apron, or pockets to carry things.

## Follow-up

Make a follow-up appointment as directed by your healthcare provider.

## Call 911

Call 911 right away if you have any of the following:

- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- Severe nausea or vomiting

## When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of the following:

- Pain that is not relieved by medicine or rest
- Calf pain, redness, or swelling
- Continued bleeding through the bandage
- Tingling, numbness, or coldness in your foot or leg
- Fever of 100.4° F (38°C) or higher, or as directed by your healthcare provider
- Shaking chills
- Excessive swelling, increased redness, or any drainage around the incision
- Swelling, tenderness, or pain in your leg