

AUSTIN BONE & JOINT CLINIC
1015 E. 32ND ST. #101
(512) 477-6341

POSTOPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS FOR ACL RECONSTRUCTION

- **Control of swelling**
Elevation of the knee (higher than the heart) and ice packs for the first week or two whenever at rest. After the first couple of weeks, use ice packs and elevation after exercise and to control pain and swelling.

- **Crutches**
Use the crutches until the first postoperative office visit. You may weight bear as tolerated unless otherwise instructed by your doctor.

- **Brace**
You will have either a hinged brace or knee immobilizer on your leg. Take the brace off for dressing changes, bathing, and certain exercises. Sleep in the brace unless otherwise instructed by your doctor. Do not sleep or rest with a pillow under the knee, as this will make it harder to obtain extension of the knee.

- **Wound Care**
Change the dressing every two to three days or as needed, depending on the amount of drainage. Expect some blood-tinged drainage from the incisions over the first few days after surgery. Clean the operative site with alcohol or peroxide. Then redress with sterile 4 x 4 gauze pads. Expect some bruising and swelling of the knee, leg, and foot. **Contact your doctor if you develop any of the following: foul smelling drainage or foul odor from the incision, red streaks or increasing redness around the incision, pus, or excessive pain.**

- **Pain Medication**
A prescription for pain medication has been prescribed for you. Follow the directions on the bottle. Do not let the pain get out of control before using the medication, especially in the first few days. It is also advisable to supplement the prescription pain medication with either ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) 3 tablets 3 times a day, or naproxen (Aleve) 1 tablet 2 times a day, for the first week or two after surgery. **Do not take these medications if your doctor has already prescribed an anti-inflammatory medication.**

- **Nausea and Itching**
You may take over-the-counter Benadryl, 25 milligrams, one or two every five hours.

POSTOPERATIVE ACL RECONSTRUCTION (CONT)

➤ Exercises

Follow the exercise program given to you at the hospital. Do these exercises 3-4 times per day, 10 repetitions each. Especially work on flexion (bending) and extension (straightening). For flexion, remove the brace and slide the heel to the buttock. For extension, place the heel on a coffee table or the arm of a couch, with the rest of the leg unsupported, allowing the knee to straighten. Hold this position for as long as you can tolerate the pain.

➤ Physical Therapy

This will be initiated some time after the first follow up visit.

➤ Bathing

Shower only, no bath. To keep the knee dry when bathing, remove the brace and wrap the knee with plastic wrap or a plastic bag and seal with waterproof tape. Be sure to pat the knee dry after bathing. Change the dressing if it becomes wet.

➤ Pain pump

A pain pump is sometimes used to reduce post op pain. The pain pump consists of a syringe, filled with a local anesthetic, connected to a catheter (small tube) coming from the wound. You will need to remove the syringe and tube when it is empty, usually about 48 hours post-op. Simply remove the tape holding the catheter to the skin and pull out the catheter. Expect some bleeding when the catheter is removed. Apply a dressing as needed.

➤ Warning Signs

Expect a slight temperature elevation after surgery. If it exceeds 101.5 degrees, call the doctor. For low grade temperature elevation, try walking, coughing, deep breathing, and Tylenol (acetaminophen). If any signs of infection appear, such as red streaks or pus, call your doctor.

➤ Follow up Appointments

Call the office (Central 477-6341, Northwest 795-8812) as soon as you get home, or the next business day, to arrange a follow up visit with your doctor 5-10 days after your surgery.

➤ How to Contact Your Doctor

There are never any dumb questions. If you have any concerns, during regular business hours, at either office (Central-St. David's 472-9011 or 477-6341) (Northwest 795-8812). After regular business hours or on weekends, the doctor on-call can be contacted through the Medical Exchange at 458-1121.