

Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL) RECONSTRUCTION

Your surgery involved taking either tissue from your knee or from a cadaver and inserted inside your knee joint to replace your torn anterior ligament (ACL). The tendon used as your new ligament is very strong. However, since it was moved from the outside of your knee to the inside, it will need to re-establish a blood supply to heal properly.

PATIENT INSTRUCTIONS

Care

As a result of your surgery, your new ligament will undergo a normal period of weakening prior to regaining its strength. **It will be important for you to protect your new ligament from excessive stress while it is this weakened state.**

- This means you will need to follow a fairly strict exercise program as guided by your provider.
- Before leaving the hospital you will be fitted with a knee brace to immobilize it. At first, you need to use the brace 24 hours a day. Remove the brace only to shower and exercise. After two weeks, you can take off your brace only for sleep or rest. You will continue to use your brace for about 4 to 5 weeks.
- Pain and swelling are normal after major surgery to the knee. You can lessen your discomfort by:
 1. Taking your medications as ordered by your doctor.
 2. Putting your leg up on pillows or on a chair.
 3. Applying ice packs to your knee for about 30 minutes/hour.
- You may remove the dressings 4 days after surgery. If the incisions are dry, you may shower. You may get your incisions wet, but do not soak your knee in the tub. You may use a chair in the shower to sit on to make showering easier. Put band-aids over incision sites after showering.

Medications / Pain

- Take your medication as prescribed.

Diet

- Resume your usual diet.

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Activity and Safety

- Before you leave the hospital you will be provided with a cold therapy unit and instructed on its use.
 - * Use the cold therapy unit continuously or as directed by your surgeon, for the first 3-7 days except when walking performing your exercises and sleeping.
 - * The cold therapy pad should not come in contact with your knee. When using the cold therapy pad use your knee. When using the cold therapy pad use your brace wrap under the pad to protect your shin from excessive exposure to the cold.
- Before you leave the hospital, you will be fitted with crutches and instructed on their use. When using your crutches, you may put as much weight on your operated leg as comfortable, unless directed otherwise by your surgeon. You will continue to use crutches for about 4 to 5 weeks. **Your brace must be locked straight in extension when you walk.**
- It is absolutely essential that you begin range of motion exercises starting on the day of surgery: See attached home exercises handout.
- You will have your first outpatient physical therapy appointment within 2 weeks after your surgery. You will attend therapy 2 times a week. Your exercises will be increased at each visit.

Workout Guidelines

- Workout 3-4x /week for 45-60 minutes per session
- Workout up to 3 sets of 10-15 repetitions
- **Ice after workouts for 15-20 minutes**
- **No seated knee extensions with weights**
- No deep knee squats

You may return to work and do:

- **Desk Work:** After 7-10 days
- **Moderate Work:** Standing, Walking, Stair Climbing, Lifting – After 6 to 12 weeks
- **Heavy Work:** Construction, Fire-fighting, Police Work – After 3 months +