

Dr. Alford's Postop Instructions: ACL Reconstruction (page 1 of 2)

DIET

Begin with clear liquids and light foods (jellos, soups, etc.), and progress to your normal diet if you are not nauseated.

WOUND CARE

Maintain your operative dressing, loosen bandage if swelling of the foot and ankle occurs.

It is normal for the knee to bleed and swell slightly following surgery – if blood soaks onto the ACE bandage, do not become alarmed – reinforce with additional dressing.

On the third post-operative day: Remove surgical dressing– if minimal drainage is present, apply band-aids or a clean dressing over incisions and change daily – you may then shave as long as the wounds remain sealed with the band-aid.

To avoid infection, keep surgical incisions clean and dry – after your stitches are removed, you may shower, but no immersion of operative leg (i.e. bath, hot tub, or swimming pool) for two weeks.

MEDICATIONS

Pain medication is injected into the wound and knee joint during surgery – this will wear off within 8-12 hours. Most patients will require some narcotic pain medication for a short period of time – this can be taken as per directions on the bottle.

Common side effects of the pain medication are nausea, drowsiness, and constipation – to decrease the side effects, take medication with food – if constipation occurs, consider taking an over-the-counter laxative. If you are having problems with nausea and vomiting, contact the office to possibly have your medication changed (401-738-3730).

Do not drive a car or operate machinery while taking the narcotic medication.

Ibuprofen 200-400mg (i.e. Advil) can be taken in between the narcotic pain medication to help smooth out the post-operative 'peaks and valleys', reduce overall amount of pain medication required, and increase the time intervals between narcotic pain medication usage.

ACTIVITY

Elevate the operative leg to chest level whenever possible to decrease swelling. Do not place pillows under knees (i.e. do not maintain knee in a flexed or bent position), but rather place pillows under foot/ankle. Use crutches to assist with walking – you are able to bear as much weight as tolerated on operative Leg while in the brace unless otherwise instructed by Dr. Alford.

Do not engage in activities which increase knee pain/swelling (prolonged periods of standing or walking) over the first 7-10 days following surgery.

Avoid long periods of sitting (without leg elevated) or long distance traveling for 2 weeks. NO driving until instructed otherwise by Dr. Alford.

May return to sedentary work ONLY or school 3-4 days after surgery, if pain is tolerable.

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BRACE

Your brace should be worn fully extended (straight) at all times (day and night – except for exercises and hygiene). Remove brace for flexion (bending) and other exercises done in a non-weight bearing position (i.e. lying or sitting).

ICE THERAPY

Begin immediately after surgery. Use icing machine continuously or ice packs (if ice machine not prescribed) every 2 hours for 20 minutes daily until your first post-operative visit – remember to keep leg elevated to level of chest while icing. It is recommended that you have a layer of cloth between the ice pad and your leg to prevent excessive cooling.

EXERCISE

Begin exercises 24 hours after surgery (straight leg raises, quad sets, heel slides, and ankle pumps) unless otherwise instructed. Discomfort and knee stiffness is normal for a few days following surgery – it is safe and, in fact, preferable to bend your knee, gradually obtaining 90 degrees of flexion (unless otherwise instructed by Dr. Alford). Complete exercises 3-4 times daily until your first post-operative visit – your motion goals are to have complete extension (straightening) and 90° of flexion (bending) at your first post-operative visit unless otherwise instructed. Perform ankle pumps and curl your toes frequently throughout the day to reduce the possibility of a blood clot in your calf (extremely uncommon).

Formal supervised physical therapy (PT) will begin after your first post-operative visit.

EMERGENCIES**

Contact Dr. Alford or his office at 401-738-3730 if any of the following are present:

- Painful swelling or numbness (note that some swelling and numbness is normal)
- Unrelenting pain
- Fever or chills (it is normal to have an elevated temperature up to 101 degrees)
- Redness around incisions.
- Color change in foot or ankle
- Continuous drainage or bleeding from incision (a small amount of drainage is expected)
- Difficulty breathing
- Excessive nausea/vomiting
- Severe calf pain

**If you have an emergency after office hours or on the weekend, contact the same office number (401-738-3730) and you will be connected to our page service – this will contact Dr. Alford or one of his covering partners if he is unavailable. If you have an emergency that requires immediate attention, proceed to the nearest emergency room.

FOLLOW-UP CARE/QUESTIONS

If you have any other questions/concerns, do not hesitate to contact Dr. Alford's office at 401-738-3730.

If you do not already have a post-operative appointment scheduled, please contact the office as soon as possible to schedule an appointment. Typically post-operative appointments are made for 7-12 days following the date of surgery.