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INSTRUCTIONS ON CARING FOR YOURSELF AT HOME

POST OP INSTRUCTIONS FOLLOWING ACL RECONSTRUCTION

Medications:

- A nerve block maybe used to minimize post-operative pain. This will wear off within 8 to 18 hours.
- Most patients will need some narcotic pain medication such as *Percocet (Oxycodone)* or *Vicodin (Hydrocodone)*. Take as directed on the bottle or by Dr. Seneviratne.
- Common side effects of pain medicine are nausea, drowsiness, and constipation. To minimize these side effects, take the smallest dose needed to control the pain. Take medications with food. If constipation occurs, take an over the counter laxative. A stool softener such as Colace may prevent constipation.
- If you have severe nausea, or your pain is not controlled please call the office to have your medication changed.
- Do not drive a car or operate machinery while taking narcotic pain medications.
- You maybe given *Celebrex* to further enhance pain control. Take as directed on the bottle. Studies have shown it reduces the overall amount of narcotic pain medication needed, and increases the time interval between narcotic pain medication usage.
- If you were **not** given *Celebrex*, *Aleve* or *Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin etc)*, can be taken in between narcotic pain medication dosing to help minimize peaks and valleys of pain.
- **You must take 1 baby Aspirin (81mg) once a day for 4 weeks.** This is to prevent a DVT (blood clot in the deep veins of your leg).
- Antibiotics are typically not prescribed after ACL reconstruction.

Diet:

- Begin with clear liquids and light foods such as broth, and Jell-O
- Progressively normalize your diet if you don't experience nausea, vomiting, or bloating.

Activity:

- You may walk as tolerated. You will need to use crutches for the first several weeks.
- You may weight bear as tolerated unless otherwise instructed by Dr. Seneviratne.
- Sex – no restrictions.
- Driving
 - Patients who have had surgery on the **left** knee, and who have an automatic transmission may drive when they can comfortably get the leg in and out of the car.
 - During driving the knee brace can be unlocked.
 - Patients who have had surgery on the left knee and have standard transmissions should not drive until they have good muscular control of the leg. This usually takes 3-4 weeks.
 - Patients who had surgery on the **right** knee should not drive until they have good muscular control of the leg. This usually takes 4-6 weeks.

Brace:

- The knee brace given to you immediately after surgery must be worn while walking and sleeping.
- It should be locked in extension (knee straight).
- You may take the brace off when doing exercises and/or the CPM machine.
- Brace hinges must be at the level of the kneecap.
- You may loosen or tighten the brace straps as necessary, but it should be snug.
- You will need to wear the brace for about 2-4 weeks.

Ice/Cryotherapy:



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- You should use the Cryocuff machine, the Gameready machine, or ice on the knee immediately after surgery. Use cold therapy as often as possible (especially after exercising) to reduce swelling and discomfort.
- If using an ice pack, do not ice the knee more than 20 minutes at a time. Let the knee warm up before reapplication. Avoid getting your wound wet.
- If you have a Cryocuff or Gameready you may keep this on the knee continuously, but follow the instructions provided by the vendor of the machine.
- For the Gameready machine, do not use compression for the first 48 hours after surgery.

Electrical stimulation sleeve (Kneehab)

- If you were provided with a Kneehab electrical stimulation sleeve please use it as directed by the orthotist who fitted you for it.

CPM (continuous passive motion) Machine:

- You should use this machine 2-3 hours at home two or three times daily for a total of 4-6 hours per day.
- Remove brace to use the CPM machine.
- The company will explain how to operate the CPM.
- Your goal with this machine is to achieve 95 degrees of flexion (bending) comfortably.
- Every time you use the CPM you should try to increase the flexion by 5 degrees. You will experience some discomfort while trying to increase your flexion.
- Once 95 degrees is obtained you may call the company to pick up the machine – usually about 3 weeks.

Crutches:

- Use the crutches when walking as the physical therapist taught you in the hospital. Put as much weight on your leg as you can tolerate. When you feel comfortable walking without your crutches you may do so. This is usually occurs at about 1-2 weeks.

Exercise:

- Begin exercises 24 hours after surgery (straight leg raises, quad sets, heel slides, and ankle pumps).
- It is safe to bend your knee immediately after surgery (unless otherwise instructed by Dr. Seneviratne) – in fact it will enhance your recovery and decrease you pain.
- It is normal for your knee to be stiff for a few days after surgery.

Wound Care:

- Keep your operative dressing on for 48 hours. You may loosen bandage if excessive swelling of the foot and ankle occurs.
- Remove all cotton and yellow gauze 48 hours after your surgery. Please leave steri-strips (white paper strips) on your wound until you see the doctor.
- Reapply ACE bandage over a new gauze pad to cover the incision.
- If you were given a stockinet, wear it for 1 week at all times (can remove it for showers and wound care).
- You may shower 48 hours after surgery, however you must place a plastic bag over the brace while showering or you have the option to take off the brace to shower. Whatever you decide to do please use CAUTION!! Be careful not to slip, twist, or fall. A stool placed in the shower so you can sit is a great idea so you can stabilize your knee. Do not soak in a bathtub, hot tub, or pool until the doctor tells you it is O.K. to do so. Once you are done showering pat the wound dry and reapply a dry dressing as directed above.

Elevation:

- When you are not walking your leg should be straight with 2 pillows under your foot or ankle (not behind your knee). Try to elevate knee as much as possible to reduce swelling.

Common Concerns:

- Numbness around the incision site on the outside part of the knee is a result of a disruption of a superficial nerve during the operative procedure. Most of this will resolve over time but a small area the size of a quarter usually remains numb. This is unavoidable because of the proximity of the nerve to the incision.
- A sudden rush or feeling of fullness with pain when going from a sitting to a standing position in the knee is



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common after surgery.

- Bruising and/or swelling of the thigh, shin and ankle are common after surgery. This usually occurs 3-4 days after surgery. This is caused by bleeding from the bone (which is cut during surgery) into the area just below the skin. To relieve this discomfort it is best to ice the leg.

Follow-up visit:

- You need to see Dr. Seneviratne or his PA Babette Bevilacqua about one week following surgery for your first post-op visit. At that time your sutures (stitches) will be removed.

Physical Therapy:

- Please begin physical therapy 1-2 days after surgery. It is O.K. to start physical therapy prior to your first post-op visit in the office.
- If PT was not pre-arranged please call the office to arrange this.

Please call if:

- If at any time you have discomfort, swelling, or redness in the calf (behind the leg between the knee and the ankle) please call the doctor immediately.
- Fever (>101.5 degrees F) especially if accompanied by chills (low grade fever is common and not be concerned with).
- Excessive bleeding.
- Pain that is not controlled with medications.
- Numbness in leg lasting more than 18 to 24 hours.
- Any difficulty breathing or heaviness in the chest.

Follow-up care/Questions

- Dr. Seneviratne or his team members will call you on the first day after surgery to address any questions or concerns. If you have not been contacted within 48 hours please call the office at (212) 960 8887.
- If you do not already have a post op appointment scheduled, please contact the office during normal business hours and ask for appointment scheduling

REMEMBER - these are only guidelines for what to expect following ACL surgery. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your knee please do not hesitate to call the office at any time.