

Total Knee Replacement



Congratulations on your new Total Knee Replacement (TKR)! This document will help you through your recovery with activity guidelines, as well as answer some of the most common questions that patients have after surgery.

Walking

We recommend that you walk as much as you feel comfortable (at least 2-3 times a day), trying to walk a little further each time. As stated above, you will need a walker or cane for stability for the first 6 weeks. When you begin to feel that you don't need the cane anymore, you can begin to wean from the cane; that is, you can stop using it for short distances and walk progressively more without it.

For the first several weeks after TKR, you will likely go up/down stairs one foot at a time. As you get stronger, we encourage you to try to climb stairs alternating one foot per step; holding on to the banister will help. Your therapist will guide you through this phase as well.

Motion

Knee motion is extremely important to work on during your recovery. Scar tissue begins to form immediately after surgery, and if the knee doesn't regain its motion within a set amount of time, it may continue to be stiff. You should work on both extension (straightening) and flexion (bending) of the knee. Your therapist will guide you through these steps.

For extension, we recommend placing a rolled towel under the heel of your operated leg. Then, using your quadriceps, press your knee downward

in order to straighten the knee. Hold for 10 seconds, and then repeat. A goal for this exercise is about 10 times per hour.

For flexion, we recommend sitting in a chair and bending your operated knee. You can use your other leg to help push the knee to bend more. Your goal for flexion is to bend to 90 degrees within the first 2 to 3 weeks of surgery.

Pain control

It is expected to need pain medicine during your recovery. It is safe to use in a limited amount and helps with your overall recovery while you regain motion and strength. It is common to feel minimal to no pain in the first 24 hours after surgery but feel some discomfort after the first or second day after surgery because the anesthetic nerve medicine will wear off. We will provide you with detailed instructions for prescriptions that will often include a combination of ice therapy, anti-inflammatories and acetaminophen.

Swelling

Your knee will have swelling following TKR. We advise using a compression/cryotherapy device, or icepacks regularly during your recovery. In the first few weeks, you will probably need to ice your knee 3-4 times per day; after about 1 month, it may be only at night; after 2 months, it may only be after physical therapy sessions. As the healing progresses and your knee gets stronger, your swelling will improve.

*If you have any problems or questions,
please call your doctor's office (8am-5pm).*

Answering service for after hours.

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It is also common to experience swelling below the knee, into the calf. Most times this is a result of gravity (standing on your feet and walking). This type of swelling should improve in the morning if you elevate your leg at night. Wearing a compression stocking that goes above the knee can also help. If the swelling in your calf persists or suddenly becomes painful despite elevation, please call the office.

Exercises

PHASE I (0-3 WEEKS)

This will be guided by your therapist. In the early phase, within the first 3 weeks after your surgery, the most important part of your recovery is regaining motion. We encourage you to perform 5 sets of 10 through the course of the day.

- Ankle pumps
- Quad sets (pressing the knee down)
- Gluteal squeezes
- Bend the knee with the help of the non-operated leg (goal for 90 degrees by 3 weeks)

PHASE II (3-6 WEEKS)

- Limited straight leg raises (do not do this with any weights)
- Pushing the operated knee to bend more with your other leg, while sitting
- Placing the operated leg on a stair/step and leaning into the knee (to increase the bend)
- Riding a stationary bicycle (without resistance) - target for 4-6 weeks

PHASE III (6-12 WEEKS)

- Continue to work on motion beyond 90 degrees
- Begin adding resistance exercises for quadriceps strengthening
- Continue quadriceps and hamstring stretching

We recommend that you listen to your body during your recovery – if you feel an increase in pain during an exercise or directly afterwards, you may have overdone it. This is an estimated timeline for recovery and each patient has a unique course. The most important aspect is maintaining the longevity of your new knee replacement!