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KNEE ARTHROSCOPY: POST-OPERATIVE INFORMATION AND INSTRUCTIONS

WHAT IS ARTHROSCOPY?

Knee arthroscopy involves the examination and treatment of the inside of your knee using a small telescope (arthroscope). It is performed through two (or more) small incisions, usually at the front of the knee. The knee joint is inflated with a large amount of fluid during the procedure, and **will be swollen** following the surgery.

WHAT WAS DONE IN THE KNEE DURING ARTHROSCOPY?

Many different procedures can be carried out during arthroscopy. Meniscus (cartilage) trimming/removal/repair, removal of loose bone or cartilage fragments, smoothing of rough joint surfaces, and ligament surgery are some of the procedures that may have been performed. Each of these procedures will have a different recovery and rehabilitation time. Your age, general health and fitness level may also influence the recovery time.

Details of the procedure will be explained to you following your surgery.

AFTER YOUR SURGERY:

HOME

- The procedure is usually performed as Day Surgery (go home the day of surgery). If you are medically unwell, vomiting or in too much pain it may be necessary to stay in hospital overnight.
- You will not be able to drive yourself home following the surgery, and cannot go home in a taxi.
- A responsible adult must stay with you overnight following the surgery.
- You will require assistance at home for at least 24 hours following surgery.

PAIN CONTROL

- Local anaesthetic is injected into the knee at the time of surgery. This may reduce or even eliminate pain for the first 4 – 8 hours. It is common for the pain to increase somewhat on the first night following surgery, and the knee is usually most sore on the day following the surgery.
- Please take regular Panadol (2 tablets, 4 times per day) for at least the first few days following surgery, regardless of how much (or little) pain you experience. If you have pain despite this regular Panadol, take an anti-inflammatory (eg Nurofen or Celebrex) in addition to the Panadol. You may have been prescribed some stronger painkillers such as Endone or Panadeine Forte. Endone can be used in addition to the Panadol and anti-inflammatory. Panadeine Forte should be used as an alternative to Panadol. If your pain is still not controlled, or if you have concerns, please contact the hospital or Mr Jones.

DRESSINGS

- Sutures and a waterproof dressing are used to close the wounds and cover the incisions. Leave these in place until your review; contact the hospital or Mr Jones if you have concerns.
- At the time of the surgery soft padding and a firm bandage is applied over the waterproof dressings. Leave the bandage on for the first 1 – 2 days, and cover it with a watertight bag when showering. If bleeding comes through the dressing reinforced it with a firm bandage and then contact the hospital.
- After the bandage and padding have been removed, you can get the underlying waterproof dressings wet whilst showering. Do not fully immerse in a bath or pool etc.

CRUTCHES

- You should bring crutches to the hospital on the day of your surgery. Crutches can be hired from most pharmacies and some physiotherapists.
- You will require crutches when standing and walking at first – a physiotherapist may see you to help with this if required. Crutches are usually required for 2 – 5 days following surgery.
- You will be instructed how much weight can be placed through the leg/knee; most people are allowed to fully weightbear as tolerated, using the crutches to ensure safe mobilising.

SWELLING

- The knee will be swollen for up to a few weeks following surgery. This is normal. Regular ice will help.

REST AND ICE

- It is very important to rest for the first 2 – 3 days following the surgery.
- Do not plan any vigorous activities for at least 2 weeks following surgery.
- Keep the leg elevated as much as possible.
- Ice the knee using an ice pack (or bag of frozen peas) for at least the first 3 days, as much as is practical, for 20 minutes at least every 2 – 4 hours. Use a cloth between the ice and your knee – do not put ice directly on the skin.

EXERCISES

Use your common sense, and do not be concerned if you cannot do all of these exercises. These instructions are generic and do not account for age and diagnosis. Do as much or as little as you can, within your own level of comfort.

Use ice on the knee after your exercises (with a cloth between the skin and the ice to prevent cold burns).

CALF EXERCISES:

Commence on the day of surgery - move your foot up and down every half hour and whenever you think of it. This helps the circulation and reduces the risk of blood clots forming.

KNEE LOCKING USING THE QUADRICEPS:

With a rolled towel under your heel, tighten the muscle at the front of your thigh, pushing your knee into the bed. Hold for 3 seconds and relax. Repeat up to 10 times, 3 times per day.

STRAIGHT LEG RAISES:

Lying flat, lock your knee straight and then lift the whole leg about 30cms off the bed. Hold for up to 3 seconds and relax. Repeat up to 10 times, 3 times per day.

PLEASE CONTACT THE HOSPITAL OR MR JONES IMMEDIATELY IF YOU NOTICE:

Fever

Severe pain

Bleeding

Increasing swelling of the knee or calf muscle

Increasing coolness in the leg or foot

Loss of colour in the leg or foot

Numbness or tingling in leg

or If you have any other concerns following your surgery

KNEE BENDING:

Slide your heel up towards your bottom as far as comfortable. Hold for up to 3 seconds. Repeat up to 10 times, 3 times per day. Gradually regain your full movement.

KNEE BENDING ON YOUR STOMACH:

Start about 4 days after your operation. Lie on your stomach and bend your knee as far as comfortable. Hold for up to 3 seconds and relax. Repeat up to 10 times, 3 times per day.

SWIMMING (AFTER 2 WEEKS AND WOUNDS HEALED):

Start by initially walking in the water. Easy freestyle with a float (pool buoy) is also suitable. Do not kick or use a kickboard until your knee is comfortable.

EXERCISE BIKE (2 – 4 WEEKS POST OP):

When you can bend the knee comfortably to a right angle (90 degrees) and the swelling has subsided you can begin to use an exercise bike. Start with the seat high and with little or no resistance. 10 minutes is usually long enough at first.