

# Total Knee Arthroplasty Postoperative Instructions

## Activity and Therapy

- You may bear weight on your operative leg **as tolerated** unless you were given different instructions.
- Use your walker, cane, or other assistive device as instructed. Do not walk without it until you are safe and cleared by your therapy team.
- Begin home exercises and physical therapy as directed. Working on knee motion—especially fully straightening the knee—is important to your recovery.
- Take short, frequent walks throughout the day. Avoid prolonged sitting; get up and move at least once each hour while awake.
- Elevate the leg above heart level when resting to reduce swelling. Use ice as directed, protecting your skin with a cloth barrier.
- Swelling, bruising, warmth around the knee, and increased discomfort after therapy are common during the first several weeks.

## PICO Dressing and Incision Care

- Your PICO dressing will remain in place for the first **7 days after surgery**.
- Keep the PICO dressing clean, dry, and intact. Do not remove it unless instructed.
- Do not soak the incision or dressing. No baths, hot tubs, or swimming until the incision is fully healed and you are cleared to do so.
- If the PICO pump alarms, the dressing becomes loose, the dressing is saturated, or there is concern for a skin reaction or adhesive allergy, contact the office.
- On postoperative day 7, remove the PICO dressing and begin **daily dressing changes**.
- For each daily dressing change:
  1. Wash your hands thoroughly.
  2. Remove the old dressing.
  3. Gently clean the incision with **sterile saline only**.
  4. Pat the area dry with clean gauze.
  5. Apply a clean, dry dressing as instructed.
- Do not use peroxide, alcohol, ointments, lotions, powders, or creams on the incision unless specifically instructed.
- Do not pick at skin glue, scabs, Steri-Strips, staples, or sutures.

## Blood-Clot Prevention

- Beginning the day after surgery, take **81 mg baby aspirin** as prescribed for prevention of blood clots.
- Do **not** take baby aspirin if you have an aspirin allergy or have been told not to take aspirin. Contact the office promptly for alternate instructions.
- Continue the baby aspirin for the duration prescribed by your surgical team.
- Walking regularly, ankle pumps, and using any prescribed compression devices or stockings also help lower the risk of blood clots.

## Pain Control

- Take pain medications exactly as prescribed.
- Use ice and elevation routinely, especially after therapy or activity.
- If you are prescribed an opioid pain medication, do not drive, drink alcohol, operate machinery, or make important decisions while taking it.
- Opioid pain medicines commonly cause constipation. Drink fluids, increase fiber as tolerated, and use the recommended stool softener or laxative if needed.
- Take prescribed anti-inflammatory medications or other pain medicines only as directed.

## Showering and Hygiene

- Keep the PICO dressing dry for the first 7 days.
- After the PICO dressing is removed, keep the incision dry and covered as instructed during daily dressing changes.
- Do not submerge the incision in water until it is fully healed and you have been cleared by the office.

## Driving, Work, and Daily Activities

- Do not drive until you are off opioid pain medication, can safely control the vehicle, and have been cleared to drive.
- Return to work depends on your job duties and recovery progress. Discuss this at your follow-up visit.
- Avoid kneeling directly on the incision until it is well healed and comfortable.
- Sexual activity may be resumed when comfortable, but avoid positions that place excessive stress on the knee or risk a fall.

## What Is Normal?

The following are common after knee replacement:

- Swelling of the knee, lower leg, ankle, and foot.
- Bruising around the knee or down the leg.
- Warmth around the knee.
- Mild numbness on the outer side of the incision.
- Clicking or a mechanical sensation in the knee.
- Pain and stiffness that fluctuate during the first several weeks, often worse after therapy or at night.

## Call the Office Promptly If You Have

- Increasing redness, warmth, swelling, or pain around the incision.
- New or worsening drainage, bleeding, foul odor, or separation of the incision.
- Fever of 101°F or higher, chills, or feeling generally unwell.
- Persistent drainage from the incision.
- Increasing calf pain, tenderness, redness, or one-sided swelling.
- A rash, blistering, itching, or skin irritation from the PICO dressing or adhesive.
- Uncontrolled pain, persistent nausea/vomiting, or constipation not relieved with the recommended regimen.

## Seek Emergency Care Immediately for

- Chest pain, shortness of breath, coughing up blood, fainting, or sudden severe dizziness.
- Sudden severe swelling or pain in the calf or thigh.
- New weakness, numbness, inability to move the foot, or the foot becoming cold, pale, or blue.
- Severe allergic reaction, including facial swelling, throat tightness, or difficulty breathing.

## Follow-Up

- Ensure you attend any follow-up appointments you have scheduled with your provider.
- Contact your provider's office with questions or concerns.