



Post-Operative Instructions – Total/Partial Knee Arthroplasty

Diet

- Start with clear liquids and light foods.
- Return to your normal diet if you are not nauseated.

Wound Care

- Keep your operative dressing in place; loosen if foot/ankle swelling occurs.
- Some bleeding and swelling is normal; reinforce soaked dressings with additional gauze or ACE wrap.
- Small white bandages over the main incision should remain until your office visit.
- Keep incisions clean and dry.
- Showering allowed 3 days after surgery using:
 - A large garbage bag over the knee or
 - Saran wrap sealed with tape above and below the dressing.
- Dressing must remain on for 1 week post-op.
- No soaking or scrubbing of the operative leg (no baths).
- Bruising around the knee, foot, and ankle is normal.
- Do not pick at incisions or remove sutures until your post-op visit.

Medications

- Surgical pain medication lasts 8–24 hours.
- Narcotic pain medication may be needed briefly; take as directed.
- Common side effects: nausea, drowsiness, constipation.
 - Take with food.
 - Use over-the-counter laxatives if constipated.
- Anti-nausea medication (Zofran or Phenergan) may be taken as needed.
- Contact the office if nausea/vomiting persists.
- Do not drive or operate machinery while taking narcotics.
- Ibuprofen 200–400 mg every 8 hours may be taken between narcotic doses to:
 - Smooth pain peaks and valleys
 - Reduce narcotic use
 - Extend time between doses
- Keep each medication on its own schedule.

Activity

- Elevate the operative leg above heart level whenever possible.
- Do not place pillows under the knee; place them under the foot/ankle instead.
- Use crutches; full weight bearing is allowed unless instructed otherwise.
- Avoid prolonged standing/walking for 7–10 days.
- Avoid long sitting without elevation and avoid long-distance travel for 2 weeks.
- No driving until cleared by your physician.
- Return to sedentary work or school in 3–4 days if pain is tolerable.

Ice Therapy

- Begin immediately after surgery.
- Use icing machine continuously or ice packs for 30 minutes every 2 hours.
- Continue until your first post-op visit.
- Keep the knee elevated while icing.



Exercise

- Begin exercises 24 hours after surgery unless instructed otherwise:
 - Straight leg raises
 - Heel slides
 - Ankle pumps
- Discomfort and stiffness are normal.
- Bending the knee is safe unless told otherwise.
- Perform exercises 3–4 times daily until your first post-op visit.
- Motion goals for first visit:
 - Full extension (straight)
 - 120° flexion (bend)
- Start formal physical therapy 3-4 days post op.
- Therapy protocols are available at johnheinrichmd.com.

Dental Work / Cleanings

- Antibiotics are required for 6 months after joint replacement before dental work.
- First dental cleaning/work should be scheduled no sooner than 3 months after surgery.

When to Call the Office

- Call 214-265-3260 or Dr. Heinrich at 214-326-9141 for:
- Painful swelling or numbness
- Unrelenting pain
- Fever over 101.5°F or chills
- Extreme redness around incisions
- Continuous drainage or bleeding (small amount is normal)
- Difficulty breathing
- Excessive nausea/vomiting
- Color changes in the leg, ankle, or foot

Appointments

First post-op appointment is typically 10–14 days after surgery.

Things to remember:

- **Losing weight before surgery is all about your diet. Yes, it is hard when your body hurts and you can't be active. But the truth is, weight loss is almost entirely about nutrition. Even if you can barely walk, you can still control what you eat.**
- **Movement is medicine. So many people believe that their arthritis came from being too active. The reality is most people who develop arthritis get it from not moving enough. Our joints and cartilage stay healthy through load and circulation. If you want to feel better (before and after surgery), you've got to move every day.**
- **Surgery is just one hour in a journey of thousands. That single hour in the OR is only the start of your recovery...what happens in the months that follow HUGELY determines your outcome. Your surgeon can replace your joint, but only you can rebuild your body through exercise, mindset, sleep, nutrition and positivity. Those things make or break recovery just as much as the scalpel.**
- **You control more of your outcome than you realize. The people who recover best believe they're in charge of their results and create a reality that guarantees success. They don't blame**



circumstances. They focus on what they can control: their attitude, their effort, and their environment. That internal locus of control is one of the strongest predictors of success in surgery, and life.

- **Stop comparing yourself to others. Comparison steals joy and blinds you to your progress. Be proud of yourself for every little step forward, no matter how small!**