

# Arthroscopic Knee Surgery: Home care instructions

While you are recovering at home, follow these recommendations to best manage pain and swelling, care for your incision, and prevent complications. Record important information from your doctor on the blanks in each section.

## How do I care for myself at home?

### Swelling and pain

To limit your pain and swelling:

- **Keep your leg elevated** above your heart for the first 2 days. Lie flat, and use 2 or 3 pillows to prop up your knee. Avoid pressure directly behind the knee to help prevent blood clots.
- **Use ice** as directed by your doctor for 2 to 3 days to relieve swelling and pain.
- **Take pain medication as directed by your doctor.** When your pain is well managed, your body can focus better on healing.
- **Don't take any other pain medication or sleep aids** that your doctor has not recommended, and don't drink alcohol while taking pain medication.

The pain medication my doctor has prescribed for me to take at home is: \_\_\_\_\_

My prescribed dose is \_\_\_\_\_ every \_\_\_\_\_ hours.

### Nausea and constipation

Some patients have nausea from the general anesthesia. If you have nausea:

- **Start by drinking liquids.** Slowly add solid foods when you are ready.

Some pain medications cause constipation. If you have constipation :

- **Take over-the-counter stool softeners** if needed.
- **Drink water,** at least 8 glasses per day.



### Incision care

To care for your incision (surgery cut):

- **Keep your dressings (bandages) in place** as long as directed by your healthcare provider. You may have a small amount of bleeding from your surgical incisions. This is normal. You can remove your dressings after (date)\_\_\_\_\_.
- **Keep your dressings (bandages) dry.** You can take a bath or shower without worrying about getting your incisions wet after (date)\_\_\_\_\_.
- **Wear your compression stockings** (if you were given any by your doctor) until (date) \_\_\_\_\_.
- **Watch for signs of infection,** which include: increased redness or swelling, pus, or a fever over 101°F (38°C). Call your doctor if they appear.

## Physical Activity

When you begin physical activity:

- **Follow your doctor’s instructions about walking or weight-bearing on your leg.** Don’t put any weight on your knee until (date)\_\_\_\_\_. You may start walking after (date)\_\_\_\_\_. If your doctor tells you to use crutches, be sure to use them every time you walk.
- **Do range-of-motion exercises as prescribed.** These will help you regain strength, balance, and range of motion in your legs and knees and prevent blood clots. Your doctor may have specific exercises for you. If so, follow them exactly. If no instructions are given, you may start exercises on the day of surgery. Do the **exercise set** (shown on the next page) 4 times per day.
- **Avoid activities that cause pain or swelling** to the knee, such as standing or sitting with your leg bent for long periods of time. Make sure to allow a rest period of at least 2 hours between exercise sets.
- **Ask about physical therapy.** Your doctor may recommend physical therapy. A physical therapist can create and supervise a program of specific exercises to increase your flexibility, strength, and balance. Physical therapy also includes a variety of treatments to reduce scar tissue, promote healing, and help prevent future injuries.
- **Return to work when your doctor recommends.** Many patients can return to office work within a week. If your work is physically strenuous and a light-duty assignment is not available, you may need to be off work longer. Your doctor recommends returning to work after (date)\_\_\_\_\_.
- **Begin other activities as advised by your doctor.** In most cases, you can start other activities a week after surgery, but talk with your doctor before you drive or do any sport or strenuous work. Don’t do activities like biking, hiking, or lifting weights until you can bend your knee at a right angle.

## What do I need to do next?

- 1 Elevate your leg to reduce swelling.
- 2 Keep your dressings clean and dry.
- 3 Take your pain medication exactly as directed by your doctor. Also, let your doctor know if you have difficulty waking up due to your medication.
- 4 Call your doctor if you have unusual bleeding or signs of infection at the incision site.

## When should I call my doctor?

Call your doctor if your knee:

- Keeps bleeding (small spots might show on the bandages, but they shouldn’t spread)
- Is more painful than you can control with rest, ice, elevation, and the pain medication your doctor prescribed
- Is draining pus or foul-smelling liquid
- Continues to swell or feel numb, and elevating your leg or loosening your bandages does not help

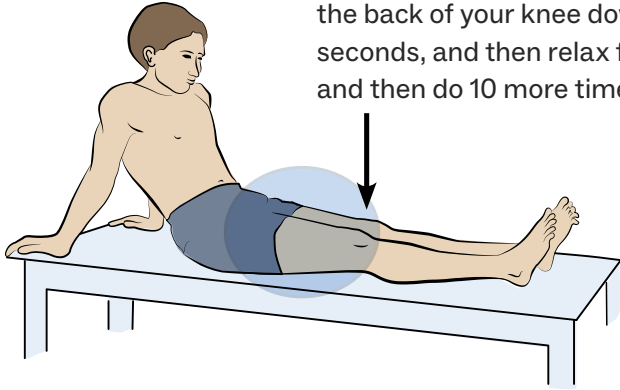
Call immediately, and consider seeking emergency care, if you have:

- Chills or a fever over 101°F (38°C)
- Nausea and vomiting that does not stop
- Chest pain or shortness of breath (if severe, seek emergency care); this may be a symptom of a blood clot in a deep vein (DVT)
- Difficulty breathing or waking up; this may be a sign of medication problems

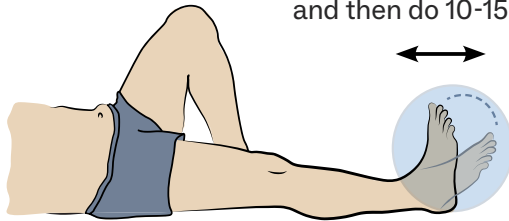
## Exercise set for the leg that had surgery

Your doctor may have specific exercises for you. If so, follow them exactly. If no instructions are given, you may start exercises on the day of surgery. Do this exercise set 4 times per day.

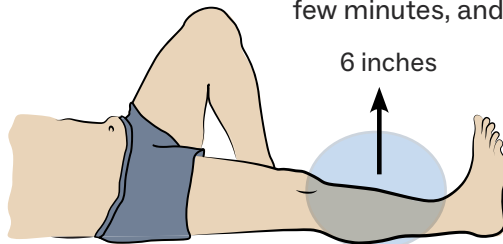
**1-Quads.** Tighten the muscles on the front of your thigh while pushing the back of your knee down into the chair or bed you are lying on. Hold for 5 seconds, and then relax for 5 seconds. Do this 10 times. Rest a few minutes, and then do 10 more times. Do ankle pumps next.



**2-Ankle pumps.** Slowly move the front of your foot up and down, as if you are pumping the brake on a car. Do this 10 to 15 times. Rest a few minutes, and then do 10-15 more times. Do straight leg raises next.



**3-Straight leg raises.** Lay down on your back. Keep your sore leg straight (the leg that had surgery). Bend your healthy leg, and put the foot flat on the floor. Slowly raise your leg that had surgery, keeping it as straight as you can, until it's about 6 inches off the floor. Hold for a count of 5 seconds. Do this 10 times. Rest a few minutes, and then do 10 more times.



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