

# At Home After a Total Joint Replacement Surgery

This handout will help guide you as you recover at home after having your total joint replacement surgery.

### Before leaving the hospital, make sure:

- You know the date and location of your next doctor's appointment;
- Physiotherapy appointments have been arranged and you have received a handout;
- You are comfortable using your Cryotherapy unit;
- You have your prescriptions and you know when to take your medications.

### Every day you should aim to:

- Get up frequently for short walks;
- Be out of bed for most of the day;
- After a knee replacement, do not leave a pillow or rolled up towel under your knee;
- Do your breathing exercises at least 10 times per day;
- Do your Physiotherapy exercises 3 times per day.

**Small daily goals will help to keep your recovery on track.**

### Pain management

You should expect to have some pain with activity and your exercises. This pain will get better over time. Take your pain medication as ordered. Swelling is very common and may last from a few weeks to a few months after surgery. If you have an ice machine or compression device, you can keep this running continuously. Otherwise, ice your joint at least 4 or 5 times a day for 20 minutes at a time. Make sure you have a towel or cloth between ice and your skin to prevent frost bite.

### Activity

Use your mobility aid (walker or cane) as prescribed by your physiotherapist. Wear non-slip supportive shoes. Do not overdo it! Take frequent rests.

*Discuss returning to work, driving, sports and sexual activities with your doctor at your first appointment after surgery.*

### Blood Thinning Medication

You may go home with a prescription for medication that prevents harmful blood clots from forming. This may be in the form of a pill or an injection. Take the blood thinner at the same time each day. While you are taking a blood thinning medication, check with your doctor or pharmacist before starting any new medications (including vitamins and herbal medication).

### Bathing

Follow your surgeon's direction for bathing. Sponge bathing is recommended until you see your doctor at your first appointment unless you have been given permission to shower. Be sure to keep your bandage protected when you are bathing.

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## Diet

You may eat a light diet on the day of surgery and return to your regular diet after that. You may notice that your bowel movements are not regular right after your surgery. This is common. Try to avoid constipation and straining with bowel movements. Have extra fiber (e.g. whole grain breads, fresh fruit), drink plenty of fluids and keep moving to prevent constipation. Unless you have been told otherwise, you should be aiming to consume 1.5-2L of fluid per day and should be eating protein with every meal and snack.

## Incision Care

After 10 to 14 days your staples will be removed (this is done either in the fracture clinic at Joseph Brant Hospital or at your family doctor's office). After your staple removal when you have been told you can shower, let the water run over your incision but do not scrub it or let the water beat down on it. Avoid soaking your incision in water (no bath tubs or swimming pools) until your doctor says it's okay.

## Dressing Care Mepilex® Border Post-Op

The bandage applied to cover your incision is a bacterial and viral barrier to help prevent infection. It is important that you keep the dressing clean and dry. The backing film is showerproof however keep it protected and follow your surgeon's direction regarding showering. If you have been permitted to shower, make sure the edges of your dressing are flat and have good contact with the skin.

Do not take off or disturb your dressing unless:

- The dressing has absorbed a large amount of drainage and it has reached the borders.
- The dressing is loose, starts to fall off or will not stay in place.

## ***You may need to call your Surgeon if:***

- You think your dressing needs to be removed or changed,
- There is leaking from your dressing,
- Your incision area is getting more painful, swollen, red or warm to touch,
- Your incision has an unpleasant odor,
- You have a fever (temperature higher than 38°C or 100.4°F) or chills,
- Your dressing is loose or starting to fall off.
- You have increased pain that is not relieved by resting or pain medication
- You have trouble urinating
- You have nosebleeds and/or blood in urine or stool if you are taking blood thinners
- You fall or hurt your leg on the side that you had surgery
- You have new or worsening shortness of breath or chest/calf pain

***If you have any questions, concerns or require additional information, contact your Surgeon's office or go to your nearest Emergency Department.***