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POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS FOR ACL RECONSTRUCTION

PAIN CONTROL: Take pain medication as directed. If you are experiencing a lot of pain at physical therapy, arrange your medication schedule to correspond to ½ hour before your scheduled appointment.

KNEE BRACE: Your knee brace is to be locked at all times, except while doing your exercises. Also, during the first week, the brace must be worn while sleeping in the locked position. The brace will usually be discontinued 4 weeks after surgery. Both crutches are to be used during the first week of surgery. You can put as much weight on the operative leg as tolerated.

CRYOCUFF: The cryocuff will be placed on your knee in the recovery room. Leave it on as much as possible for the first 3 days. Refill with cold water as needed. After 3 days, use it for a minimum of 4 times a day for 30 minutes. The more you use it, the less swelling and inflammation you will have (the cryocuff can be removed when not in use).

BANDAGES: You may remove the outer dressing and gauze pads after 48 hours. Do not remove the steri-strips (small pieces of tape running across the incision). Keep your sutures clean and dry. If you wish to shower, you may use a plastic bag or purchase a cast cover in a drugstore. Your sutures will be removed approximately 7-10 days after surgery. Please call the office to schedule this appointment.

PHYSICAL THERAPY: You should start physical therapy 2-3 days after surgery. You should already have this appointment scheduled. The most important aspect of your recovery the first week is to achieve full extension. While sitting with your leg extended, remove your brace and place a small rolled towel under your ankle. You should try to push the back of your knee down to the bed. This should be done at least 3-4 times a day for 20-30 minutes.

DRIVING. No driving during the first week after surgery regardless of the operative knee. Driving an automobile may begin when the brace is unlocked at all times (usually after 2 weeks) only if the operative knee is the **left**. If the operative knee is the **right**, driving usually begins 3-4 weeks after surgery. Driving a standard transmission usually begins at 3-4 weeks post-surgery regardless of the operative knee.

RETURNING TO WORK OR SCHOOL: You may return to work (sedentary) or school 7-10 days after surgery if pain is tolerable. Returning to heavy labor will be determined by Dr. Allen.

NORMAL SENSATIONS AND FINDINGS AFTER SURGERY:

- a. Shin pain
- b. Knee swelling and warmth up to 3 weeks
- c. Small amount of bloody drainage
- d. Numbness to incision area
- e. Soreness to Achilles tendon area (area above the heel)
- f. Soreness and swelling to back of the knee
- g. Bruising to lower leg (black and blue appearance)
- h. Lower leg swelling including the ankle – if this occurs, elevate the leg above the heart and apply ice to swollen area
- i. Numbness to the foot – will resolve in a few days
- j. Low-grade temperature less than 101.5 degrees – if this occurs, drink plenty of fluids and cough and deep breathe (take 10 breaths, on the last hold for a second then forcefully cough a few times). A low-grade temperature is normal for up to a week after surgery.
- k. Small amount of redness to the area where the sutures insert the skin.
- a. Low back discomfort due to the epidural/spinal anesthesia – apply heating pad as needed.

NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IMMEDIATELY IF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING SIGNS OR SYMPTOMS OCCUR:

- a. Change is noted to your incision (i.e. increased redness or drainage)
- b. Sharp pains in the back of your calf (especially when we pull our toes back toward your nose)
- c. Temperature greater than 101.5 degrees
- d. Fever, chill, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea
- e. Sutures become loose or fall out and incision becomes open
- f. Drainage becomes yellow, pus-like, or foul-smelling
- g. Increased pain unrelieved by medication or measures mentioned above