

# OrthoKansas, LLC

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## DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS FOR LOWER EXTREMITY SURGERY

- Your doctor will want to see you in his clinic 8 to 10 days after your surgery. Please call 785 843-9125 or 800 843-9616 to schedule your postoperative appointment.
- If crutches or a walker are needed, please rent or borrow them prior to your surgery.

### Weight-bearing status

- \_\_\_\_\_ You may put *full weight* on the affected leg *without* crutches or walker.
- \_\_\_\_\_ You may put *full or partial weight* on the affected leg *with* crutches or walker as tolerated.
- \_\_\_\_\_ *Do not put any weight* on your operated leg; use crutches, walker or wheelchair.

### Dressing/splint care

- \_\_\_\_\_ Wear your cast/splint/immobilizer at all times when ambulating and when sleeping during the day and night until your first post-op visit.
- \_\_\_\_\_ You may change your dressing in 2 to 3 days. Keep your incisions covered with dressings or band aids and an ace bandage until your sutures are removed. Do not put medication on your incisions.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Keep the surgical area dry. To bathe, place a trash bag over your leg and securely tape it to your skin to seal it. You may get your incisions wet after your sutures or staples are removed. Please leave steri-strips in place 3 or 4 days before removing them.

### Elevation

Elevating is very important to help keep swelling and discomfort controlled. Elevate as much as possible the first 3 to 5 days, and then as needed, when symptomatic, to keep swelling stabilized. It is not necessary to elevate at night, so you may sleep in a comfortable position. When elevating, lie flat or partially reclined, with two or three pillows under your leg so it is at or above heart level. During your recovery, continue to elevate as needed.

### Ice

To help reduce pain and swelling, apply an ice bag to the surgical area for 15 to 20 minutes every 1 to 2 hours for the first 2 to 3 days. To avoid frostbite, place a towel between the ice bag and your skin. It is not necessary to use ice during the night. Continue to use ice 4 to 6 times daily the first week, then as needed for as long as it is effective. Using ice during your rehab and physical therapy phase may continue to be helpful.

### Circulation

To encourage circulation and decrease swelling, wiggle your toes and ankle several times each hour. You may check circulation by pressing on your large toenail for two seconds until it turns white, and then let go. If the nail turns pink in 3 to 4 seconds, it indicates adequate circulation.

### Medication

- Your doctor will give you a written prescription for pain medicine as you leave the surgery center. Take as prescribed with food to help prevent stomach irritation.
- Pain medicine, general anaesthesia and inactivity may cause constipation. A diet consisting of fiber, whole grains, fresh fruit (except bananas) and fluids may prevent this. Walking around the house several times daily may also help. Call the office if this persists beyond three days.

- While you are asleep in the operating room, your doctors may inject a long-acting numbing medicine in the surgical area to help relieve your immediate postoperative discomfort. When you start to notice tingling, burning or throbbing, begin taking your pain medication. This allows it to become effective before the local anaesthesia wears off.

### Cold Therapy Unit

We recommend cold therapy to help decrease swelling and reduce pain. The advantage of using this unit instead of ice bags is that the temperature can be controlled allowing continuous use four hours at a time. The thermometer built into the hose regulates the temperature, which should read 45 to 50 degrees for safe use. The motor will pump cold water through the hose to the pad positioned over your surgical site. Press the two release buttons to disconnect the pad from the hose to allow you to walk. If the weight of the pad causes it to slide down, you may remove the ace bandage and pad, then place dressing over your incisions and secure with an ace. Next, place the cooling pad over the ace and secure with another ace. Be sure to place a barrier between your skin and the ice pad.

- ✓ Instead of using ice cubes in the cooler until, we recommend filling plastic drink bottles with water and freezing them. Place three or four bottles in the cooler and as they thaw rotate with frozen ones.
- ✓ Be sure to always have a barrier between your skin and the ice pad to prevent skin irritation.
- ✓ Using cold therapy during the day will be sufficient but you may also use it at night if you like.
- ✓ **This may be used 3 to 5 days following surgery to maximize benefit. Cold packs may then be used if continued ice is desired. DO NOT USE HEAT DURING THE RECOVERY PHASE.**

### Call the office to report any of the following:

- ✓ Painful swelling or increased pain unrelieved by pain medication, icing, or by elevating the extremity above heart level for one hour.
- ✓ Elevated temperature above 101 degrees.
- ✓ Bloody drainage that continues to soak the dressing.

Please feel free to call our office with concerns or questions.