



Frequently Asked Questions after Total Knee Replacement

- 1. What is the chance for success?** Success of the surgery should be answered by asking yourself the following three questions: Are you glad you had the operation? Did it fulfill your expectations? Would you do it again? Approximately 98% of patients at one year will say “yes” to all three questions.
- 2. What is the recovery time?** Each patient heals from surgery at a different pace. In most cases, you will be restricted to the use of a walker or crutches for approximately 2-3 weeks. You will then be allowed to advance to a cane outdoors and no support around the house for several weeks. You will gradually return to normal function without any assistive devices. This usually takes approximately 3 months but may take longer.
- 3. When can I drive?** If you had surgery on your right knee, you should not drive for at least 4 weeks. After 4 weeks you may return to driving as soon as you feel comfortable. If you had surgery on your left knee, you may return to driving as soon as you feel comfortable if you have an automatic transmission. If you are driving a straight shift automobile, it will be 4 weeks regardless of which knee you have surgery on. Do not drive if you are taking narcotics.
- 4. When can I travel?** You may travel as soon as you feel comfortable doing so. You should get up to stretch or walk at least once an hour and stay well hydrated when taking long trips. This is important to help prevent blood clots.
- 5. When can I return to work?** It depends on the nature of your job. If your work is mostly sedentary, you can probably return within 1 month. If your work is more active, you may require up to 3 months before you can return to full duty. In some cases, more or less time off will be necessary.
- 6. What activities are permitted following surgery?** You may return to most activities as tolerated, including walking, gardening, dancing, and golf. Good activities to help with motion and strengthening are swimming and use of a stationary bicycle. You should avoid high impact activities like running and jumping and vigorous sports such as singles tennis.
- 7. How long will my total knee last?** Ninety to ninety-five percent of total knee replacements should last 15 years or longer. The most important factors in maintaining your knee replacement would be your activity level and keeping your weight under control.
- 8. When can I shower?** You may shower 4 days after your operation. You will have steri-strips (brownish pieces of tape) over your incision line. These will gradually begin to curl around the edges at 2 weeks after surgery. When this happens, you may gently pull the curled tape off. Underneath will be a healed incision line. Also, you may notice a clear piece of thread coming from the top and bottom of your incision line. Do not pull or trim this suture. These are

absorbable sutures, and they will fall off on their own somewhere around the fourth week. Be sure to dry the incision line well after showering.

9. **When can I immerse my knee totally, such as for bathing or swimming in a pool?** Your knee can be totally immersed once your incision is completely healed.
10. **How long will I need a bandage on my incision?** After the first initial dressing change in the hospital, you will not be required to use a bandage on your incision. If there is any drainage, use a dry sterile gauze or band-aid to protect the area.
11. **How long will I be on pain medication?** It is not unusual to require some form of pain medication for approximately 6-12 weeks. Initially, the medication will be strong (such as a narcotic). Taking it as prescribed usually provides the most effective pain relief. Most people are able to wean off their strong pain medication after 1 month and switch to an over-the-counter medication such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen.
12. **Can I go up and down stairs?** Yes. Initially, you will lead with your operated leg when coming down. As your muscles get stronger and your motion improves, you will be able to perform stairs in a more normal fashion (usually in about a month).
13. **When can I resume sexual intercourse?** As soon as you are comfortable.
14. **Will I set off the security monitors at the airport?** You will probably set off the alarm. Be proactive and inform the security personnel that you have had a total knee replacement and will most likely set off the alarm. Wear clothing that will allow you to show them your knee incision if necessary. A letter from your physician or a wallet card is no longer of any help when passing through security checkpoints.
15. **When can I kneel?** After several months you can try to kneel. It may be painful at first but will not be harmful or damaging to your knee. Much of the discomfort comes from kneeling on your recent incision.