

Physiotherapy Following a Total Knee Replacement

Information, advice and initial exercises

Physiotherapy

Name: _____ NHS number: _____

Introduction

This leaflet provides information about a Total Knee Replacement. It is for people who have decided to have this surgery after a discussion about the options, benefits and potential risks with their consultant.

There are various reasons for having a knee replacement, such as osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis or disruption of the joint surfaces, secondary to previous trauma.

A total knee replacement is an operation which involves replacing the surfaces of both the femur (thigh bone) and the tibia (shin bone). Sometimes the surface of the patella (or kneecap) is also replaced.

About your wound

All wounds progress through several stages of healing. Depending upon your treatment you may experience such sensations as tingling, numbness and itching. You may also feel a slight pulling around the stitches or clips, or a hard lump forming. These are perfectly normal and are part of the healing process.

Your knee replacement

Your knee will take time and effort for it to heal properly as scar tissue around the knee heals and muscle strength around the knee is restored.

Physiotherapy advice

Exercise under the guidance of your physiotherapist will form a key part of your recovery. Recent research suggests physiotherapy exercises are associated with an improvement in physical function and reduced pain at 3-4 months after your total knee replacement. Exercises will help improve your movement and strength, as well as helping to reduce pain and swelling.

Exercises for your Total Knee Replacement

Exercising the main muscle groups around the knee is very important both before and after having a knee replacement. Try to do these exercises regularly, for instance for 10 minutes three times a day. However, it's important to find a balance between rest and exercise so you don't overwork your knee. Exercises following knee replacement surgery aims to help straighten, strengthen and aid bending of the knee.

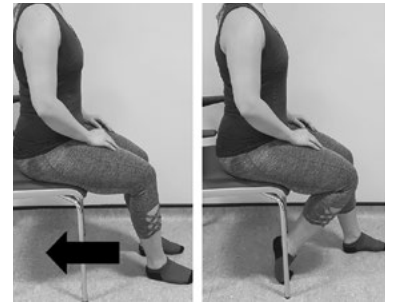
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Knee bends on chair:

Sit in a chair with your foot on the ground. Slide your foot firmly towards you and then release. Hold for three seconds each time in the fully bent position. Don't allow your hips to move, just the foot.



Inner range quads exercise:

Sit with your knee bent over a rolled up towel and tighten up your knee muscles to lift your heel off the ground. Keep your knee firmly down on the roll. Hold for a few seconds, trying to get your heel as high as you can, then relax and repeat. If you have kneecap problems you may need to avoid this exercise if it causes pain.



Passive knee stretches:

Sit or lie with your leg out in front of you. Put your heel up on a block or pillow so that the knee hangs in mid-air. Let your knee stretch for a short time under its own weight, building up to about five minutes (or less if it's painful).



Static quad exercise:

Static quads exercise: With your knee straight, tense up the front muscles of your thigh as if you're trying to straighten your knee and lift your heel. Hold for a few seconds then relax.



Straight-leg raise:

Sit or lie with your leg out straight. Tighten your thigh muscles, straighten your knee and lift your whole leg 6 inches up off the bed or floor. Hold for three seconds and then lower slowly. Don't do this exercise if you've had a total hip replacement on the same side.



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What will my recovery involve?

Removal of dressing and staples/stitches

An appointment should have been given to you to have your sutures or clips removed when you were discharged from hospital. These are typically removed at 2 weeks post operation by a district nurse or in the hospital.

Stockings

Must be worn for 6 weeks to reduce the risk of other complications.

Walking

Crutches are beneficial initially to help you walk. Over the first few weeks your physiotherapist will work with you to wean you off your crutches and encourage independent walking.

Restrictions after a Total Knee Replacement

- No kneeling for 6 weeks
- No sitting crossed legs for 6 weeks

What to expect after a Total Knee Replacement

Swelling & Numbness

Swelling around the knee can last for up to 18 months, but especially within the first 3 months it is normal for you knee, lower leg and ankle to be swollen. Applying ice to the area as advised by your physiotherapist can help with reducing the swelling. When using ice make sure that it is not directly applied on to the skin and is kept in a towel or bag. Keeping your leg elevated is also a good way of reducing swelling by placing your foot on another chair that is the same height.

Numbness is frequently reported around the scar site following surgery. This usually improves within the first 6 months, but can show signs of recovery up to 3 years later, and some people are always left with some mild numbness.

Pain and joint stiffness

It is common to experience pain and stiffness after your operation. To help with the stiffness you will need to complete regular exercises as advised by your physiotherapist. It can take several months for the pain to settle, however a small group of patients experience long-term

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pain after a knee replacement. To help with the pain, taking regular pain relief may be required as advised by your GP or consultant. If what you have been prescribed is not relieving your pain, or the pain is becoming worse, please see your GP.

Driving

Driving is not allowed for the first 6 weeks following your surgery. Discuss returning to driving in your 6 week post-operative check with your consultant.

Contact Details

If you have any questions or concerns, you can contact us on one of the following numbers:

Telephone: 0121 507 2664 (Option 3)

Opening times: Monday- Friday 8am till 6pm

Further Information

British Association for Surgery of the Knee

Specifically designed for members of the public, covering public and patient education material.

<https://baskonline.com/public/>

(Website accessed 25 August 2021).

Sources used for information in this leaflet

Artz, N., Elvers, K. T., Et al. (2015). Effectiveness of physiotherapy exercise following total knee replacement: systematic review and meta-analysis. *BMC musculoskeletal disorders*, 16(1), 1-21.

British Association for Surgery of the Knee. Available at: <https://baskonline.com/professional/> (Accessed 25 August 2021)

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ML5528

Issue Date: February 2022
Review Date: February 2025