



## Post-Operative Instructions: Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL) Reconstruction (With or Without Meniscus Repair / Meniscectomy)

### Prescription Medications

#### **Colace (Docusate Sodium):**

- This medication is to help with constipation, a common side effect after taking narcotic pain medications (like Norco) and general anesthesia.
- Take 1 pill in the morning and 1 in the evening to prevent constipation.
- It is normal to take several days to make a bowel movement after surgery
- Drink plenty of clear liquids as the anesthesia can cause dehydration/constipation as well

#### **Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen (Norco):**

- This is a narcotic medication for pain, to be taken **AS NEEDED**.
- Plan to stay on a scheduled dose of 1-2 tablets every 4-6 hrs for the first 1-3 days.
  - Can then begin to space out / discontinue the medication, transitioning to Acetaminophen (Tylenol) only
  - **DO NOT** exceed 4,000 mg of Acetaminophen in a 24-hour period.
- Do not drive, drink alcohol, or take Acetaminophen (Tylenol) or additional narcotics/pain medications **WHILE** taking this medication
- **Common side effects:** nausea, drowsiness, and constipation
  - To decrease the side effects, take with food
  - If constipation occurs, take the stool softener as directed

#### **Scopolamine patch:**

- For some patients, the anesthesia team will put on a scopolamine patch behind your ear to prevent nausea.
- If you are prescribed one, you can leave this in place for 72 hours.
- When you take it off, wash your hands thoroughly or it can make your vision blurry.

#### **Zofran (Ondansetron):**

- This is an anti-nausea medication.
- It is a dissolving tablet that is to be placed on your tongue – allow it to dissolve, and swallow.
- Take 1 tablet as needed every 4-6 hours for the first 2 days after surgery.

#### **Aspirin**

- This medication thins the blood in order to prevent blot clots – take as directed
- Please contact the office should severe calf pain or significant swelling of the calf or ankle occurs



## Wound Care

- Leave the bulky surgical bandage on and **DO NOT** shower for 48 hours
  - Can loosen bandage if swelling of foot/ankle occurs
- After 48 hours, remove bandages and gauze, but **LEAVE STERI-STRIPS** (white tape) **IN PLACE**.
  - You may shower at this point.
  - Cover incision sites with waterproof bandage prior to getting into the shower.
    - Should the incisions accidentally get wet, pat them dry with a clean towel – **DO NOT SCRUB**
- It is normal to see a lot of blood-tinged (may be pinkish-yellow) soaked fluid on the bandages
  - If bandages become soaked, okay to reinforce with additional dressing
- In between showers, leave the incision sites open to air
  - **DO NOT APPLY LOTIONS OR OINTMENTS TO THE INCISION SITES**
- Your stitches will be removed at your first post op visit
  - You may shower at this point without waterproof bandages over the incision sites.
  - **DO NOT** scrub the incision sites – you may let soap and water run down the incisions and pat dry with a towel once you're done.
- **DO NOT** soak in any pool/bath water until 4 weeks after surgery

## Physical Therapy (PT)

- PT should start between 1-3 days after surgery unless otherwise instructed
- At your first appointment, your therapist should instruct you regarding your gait / walking pattern with crutches
  - Additionally, please ask your therapist to confirm proper placement and application of your brace as well as to instruct you on proper weightbearing
- Your goal for your first visit is to be able to extend (straighten) your operative leg equal to your nonoperative leg
- Choose a PT clinic close to your home so you can be compliant with your program.
- Please bring your prescription for therapy and PT protocol (provided on surgery day and also on the website) to your first appointment.
- If you do not have a therapist in mind, or wish to be provided information for a therapist, we can provide you with a list of physical therapist recommendations that we commonly refer our patients to, depending on your location

## Brace

- Brace will be provided on the day of surgery
- Immobilizer knee brace should be worn at all times – **ESPECIALLY** at night/sleeping and when walking
- Brace can be removed for personal hygiene only (i.e. showering)
  - Be sure to keep the knee straight while in the shower – can use shower chair if needed
- The brace should be set in the correct position and locked into place
  - **DO NOT MOVE THE DIAL ON THE BRACE UNLESS YOU ARE INSTRUCTED OTHERWISE**
  - The brace should be locked in extension (0 degrees of flexion).
  - The point of the brace is to prevent flexion of your knee and protect your repair

## Weight Bearing

- Crutches will be provided for you on the day of surgery
- You will be given specific instructions regarding your weight bearing status after surgery.
  - Most patients will be weightbearing as tolerated.
  - This means that you may put as much weight onto your operative extremity as you can tolerate the pain
  - If a certain percentage of weight put onto the extremity is painful, decrease the amount until you can tolerate it. If you do not have pain, feel free to put your full weight onto the extremity.



- Allow pain to be your guide
- **If you have had a meniscal repair**, you may **NOT** bear full weight onto your operative extremity for a minimum of 6-8 weeks post op.
- If you are **partial weightbearing**, you will be instructed on how to maintain your partial weightbearing status.
- Dr. Nho's team will update your weightbearing status at your follow up visits and let you know when you can begin to progress towards full weightbearing

### **Icing**

- Icing is very important in the initial post-operative period and should begin immediately after surgery
- Use ice machine (or ice packs) continuously for 20 minutes every 2 hours, daily until your first post-operative visit
  - Remember to keep leg elevated to level of chest while icing.
  - Care should be taken with icing to avoid frostbite to the skin

### **Follow-Up**

- You will need to follow up for your 1st post-operative between 2-3 weeks from surgery – this will be a PA visit
- A new physical therapy prescription will be given to you at that time and any sutures will be removed
- Please call central scheduling or use the link below to make an appointment (contact information below)

### **When Should I Contact the Office?**

- If you have a fever >100.4° F.
  - A low-grade temperature (up to 100° F) is expected after surgery but let us know if it gets this high!
- If you develop chills, sweats, excessive nausea/vomiting, difficulty breathing, chest pain
- If you develop calf pain or color changes in foot or ankle,
- If you have pus, significant pain, warmth or redness surrounding the incision sites.
- If you are unable to urinate >1-2 days after surgery
- If you are unable to pass a bowel movement >6-7 days after surgery

### **Important Information**

- *Office Hours:* Monday – Friday; 7:30am –4:30pm
- *After Hours/Emergency Contact:* Resident/Fellow – 708.236.2600
- *Central Scheduling:* 708.236.2701 | <https://rushortho.radixhealth.com/dash/self/#/schedule/29>
- *Administration:* Jeannie Taylor – 312.432.2525
- *Physician Assistants:* Sara, Delaney, & Erica – 312.432.2388 | [nhopa@rushortho.com](mailto:nhopa@rushortho.com)

**We are in clinic or surgery and not answering calls in real time – we will return all voicemails within 24-48 hours.**