



A patient's guide to
routine advice:
six weeks after your total
knee replacement

This leaflet is provided approximately six weeks after your surgery to give advice and tips on how to get the best from your recent knee replacement surgery.

Firstly, it is normal for the knee to still be swollen. This may take many months to resolve and is normal. However, if you experience any **calf swelling** with pain, you should contact your GP or local emergency facility. There is still a risk of deep vein thrombosis.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is there anything I can do to aid my recovery?

Yes, the outcome depends very much on you and your participation in the exercises recommended by the physiotherapist. Try and make it part of your daily routine.

Emotions

You will probably be pleased to be discharged from hospital but you may also feel vulnerable and it is not uncommon to feel tearful. For some patients the process of recovery can be frustrating.

Driving

It is advisable to inform your insurance company that you have had this operation before you start driving again. Most patients can return to driving **at this time**. You need to feel confident performing an emergency stop.

Exercise

It is important to continue the knee exercises you have been taught by the physiotherapist to increase your muscle strength and reduce stiffness.

Mobility

Wean yourself off crutches when you feel confident to do so and increase your walking distance as you feel comfortable. You can use public transport when you feel safe walking around and getting on and off lower chairs.

Housework

Gradually increase the amount of housework that you carry out over the next few months. Only kneel if it is comfortable to do so; you may wish to practise this gently over time.

Sleeping

You can lie on either side when it is comfortable to do so and you may find putting a pillow between your knees will support your operated limb. It is important **NOT** to sleep with a pillow under your knee.

Flying

We recommend that from **six weeks** after surgery you limit any flights to two hours. Then at **12 weeks** this restriction is lifted. Whilst flying, do ankle exercises to maintain good circulation; drink plenty of fluids and occasionally walk about when permitted to do so.

Your knee replacement is unlikely to set off the security equipment at the airport.

Returning to work

This depends on the type of work you do, how well you have recovered, and how you feel physically and emotionally. Most people return to work after **six to 12 weeks**. Remember you need to be able to get up and move around to reduce stiffness.

Sport / Leisure

Most activities can be resumed after **three to six months**, depending on comfort and level of competition. The best way to resume an activity is to take it slowly and set small goals.

- Low impact sports are no problem. For example, swimming (breast stroke **after three months**), cycling, doubles tennis, gym work after instruction, golf
- High impact sports are **not recommended** and therefore are participated in at your own risk, e.g. jogging, singles tennis, squash, jumping activities, football
- Skiing should only be participated in if you are an experienced skier

Gardening

- **For at least another 6 weeks** avoid strenuous activities such as mowing the lawn. Digging or moving a wheelbarrow should be undertaken with care. You can work at a bench, but avoid standing in one position for too long, or if possible, sit on a high stool. Begin with lighter tasks; build up your stamina and strength over time.

An important medical reminder:

Bacteria in the blood stream can infect joint replacements even years after surgery. If you develop any infection, or if any medical or dental procedure is planned for an area of your body that is infected, you should consult your GP / Dentist for advice.

Keeping your new knee healthy in the long term

It may take a year to 18 months before you feel back to your usual self. Reducing or maintaining a healthy weight will help you to keep active and mobile.

Regular exercise and activities such as swimming, walking and cycling are good for your knee and your general health.

If you have any comments about this leaflet or would like it translated into another language/large print, please contact the Clinical Governance Department on 020 8909 5439/5717.

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