



Department of Physical Therapy

## Total Knee Replacement: Home Instructions

### Home Exercise Program

Perform the exercises you did with your physical therapist while you were in the hospital. Try to exercise 2-3 times a day. Start with 10 repetitions. Gradually increase to 20 repetitions as your pain and strength will allow.

Your knee will not heal faster by exercising more often. Remember that rest is an important part of your recovery.

Perform your ankle pump exercise 30-50 times an hour during the day to help improve circulation and to reduce the risk of blood clots in your leg.

### Activity

It is important that you stay active during your recovery; however, limit your activities. Too much activity can result in knee pain, swelling and increased drainage during the early stages of recovery.

In addition to performing your home exercises, take **short** (20-30 feet) **walks** (using your walker or crutches) every hour during the day. These short walks will improve circulation in your legs and help control swelling and pain.

Take **longer** (100-200 feet) **exercise walks** 3-4 times daily to help build endurance and strength. Avoid hills, inclines and uneven surfaces. They can cause you to lose your balance and fall.

When walking, if you notice you are getting tired or having knee pain/swelling, it is time to rest. Let how you feel, amount of knee pain and swelling be your activity level guide.

### Cold Therapy

You received a cold therapy unit when you left the hospital. Cold therapy helps decrease pain, swelling and inflammation. This unit circulates cold water through a cold pad that you place on your knee with Velcro straps. When using this unit, always use an insulation barrier (towel) between the cold pad and your skin. The cold pad is too cold and will cause injury if applied directly to the skin.

*Attached are the instructions showing you how and when to use your cold therapy unit at home.*

### Resting and Sleeping

It is important to rest and sleep during your recovery. Rest anytime you feel tired or fatigued.

When resting, make sure your knee is straight. Do not place a pillow or rolled towel under your knee to keep it bent. Doing so will cause the tissue inside your knee to shorten, and it will be very hard to get your knee to straighten.

When resting, elevate your feet as often as you can to prevent swelling in your calves and feet. You can rest your feet on the floor when you are at the table eating. However, elevate your feet when sitting watching TV, working on the computer or reading.

When sleeping on your side, place a pillow between your knees for comfort. If you wake during the night, roll over to your back and straighten your knee.

### Dressing and Bathing

To improve safety and prevent falling, dress and bathe while sitting. If you must stand, use your walker for support and have your Care Partner assist you.

### Stair Climbing

Your physical therapist taught you how to go up and down stairs using your walker or crutches. Your Care Partner should be behind you when you are going up the stairs and in front of you when you are going down the stairs.

#### **Remember:**

- Your "good" leg is your non-affected leg. Your "bad" leg is your affected leg (the leg you had surgery on).
- When going upstairs, lead with your "good" leg.
- When going downstairs, lead with your "bad" leg.
- Your assistive device (walker or crutches) always stays with your "bad" leg.

*continued*

## Activities to Avoid

- **DO NOT** sit in a low, soft chair for 6-10 weeks.
- **DO NOT** sit longer than 1 hour without getting up and walking briefly.
- **DO NOT** take long trips (car or plane) until approved by your doctor.
- **DO NOT** twist or jerk the affected leg.
- **DO NOT** squat, kneel, jump or run until your surgeon approves.
- **DO NOT** twist your knee while having weight on your leg. Pick up your feet when turning.
- **DO NOT** prop a pillow under your knee when resting.
- **DO NOT** take part in contact sports.
- **DO NOT** force your knee to bend when going from standing to sitting. Slowly work your affected leg outward as you sit down.
- **DO NOT** plop down when sitting. Hold the arms or the seat of the chair while lowering yourself to a sitting position.
- **DO NOT** place more weight on your leg than instructed to.

## Future Medical Appointments

Before an appointment with your dentist, urologist or gastroenterologist (GI doctor), our surgeons recommend that you tell him or her that you have had a total knee replacement. These doctors may prescribe an antibiotic before performing any procedure to help prevent an infection. If you or any of your doctors have any questions about the use of antibiotics, please contact your orthopaedic surgeon.

If you have any questions about these instructions, please call the Physical Therapy department at **(864) 797-1201**.