

SIMON W. YOUNG

*MBCChB FRACS MD
Orthopaedic Surgeon, Senior Lecturer*

TOTAL KNEE REPLACEMENT Post-Operative Care

1. WOUND CARE

You will have waterproof dressings covering the incisions, these should be left on and kept dry. Showering is okay but not soaking in the bath.

It is expected to have some blood ooze on the dressing. After leaving hospital the dressing can stay on until your follow up appointment.

The sutures used are absorbable. After 14 days the dressing can be removed and let the adhesive strips (steristrips) peel off. After 2-3 weeks when the wounds are completely healed you can swim/bath again.

If you develop **fevers**, or **excessive redness** or **discharge** from your wound, please contact us on the details below.

2. ACTIVITY

Elevate your knee as much as possible and avoid long periods of time with the leg down.

You can put full weight through the leg when standing or walking.

Crutches can be used for as long as you need them for comfort and balance. You can discontinue using the crutches once you have full control of your muscles around the knee and it is comfortable to walk (usually at least 2-4 weeks).

As it is sometimes difficult to get your knee fully straight after knee replacement surgery, avoid keeping pillows directly behind the knee. It is better to place the pillow under the calf.

It is expected to have some discomfort and swelling in the knee in the first few months after knee replacement. Elevation and icing (up to 30 minutes, 4-5 times a day) can help control swelling in the first 2 weeks after surgery. Take your pain medication regularly.

3. PHYSIOTHERAPY

Physiotherapy is an important part of your recovery, in particular regaining **range of motion**. Work on both **flexion (bending)** the knee as well as **extension (getting the knee fully straight)**.

Everyone responds to surgery differently in terms of pain and inflammation, so do not worry if you are progressing faster or slower than others. As long as you keep performing the exercises each day, your knee movement will gradually return.

FOLLOW UP

Wendy will typically arrange a follow up appointment 2-3 weeks after the surgery, please liaise with her to ensure the date and time is suitable for you.

If you have any concerns prior to your appointment please
phone 09 521 9846 or email ortho@axisportsmedicine.co.nz

After hours or if the query is urgent you can contact
Simon Young on 021 616 183 or email simon.young@auckland.ac.nz

TOTAL KNEE REPLACEMENT

Questions & Answers

1. What medications do I take?

Your anaesthetist will prescribe post operative pain medication. In the first few weeks make sure to take this regularly. It is much better to take pain relief and do your exercises, rather than not doing them because of pain.

2. When can I drive?

You can drive when you can easily get into and out of the car without difficulty, When you are no longer using crutches, when you have enough control of your leg that you can feel safe and confident behind the wheel, and you are no longer taking strong pain medications. This is usually about 4 - 6 weeks for the left knee and 6-8 weeks for the right knee.

3. When can I return to work or school?

This depends upon the demands of your job, but plan to take at least 4 weeks off of work. You can be back to a desk job within 4-6 weeks but physically demanding jobs may take 3 - 4 months to return to.

4. Do I need a brace?

No, the implants are stable and you can put full weight through the leg straight away.

5. How long does it take for the swelling to go away?

It can take 6-12 months before the swelling is completely resolved. The knee will also feel slightly warmer than the other side for this period. Swelling will also be noticed around the ankle, particularly towards the end of the day.

6. When can I fly again?

You can travel from the 6 week mark. If you need to travel earlier discuss with Simon Young.

7. Can I kneel following the surgery?

Yes. However only about 50% of people can kneel comfortably after knee replacement. A cushion may help. However it may be difficult for 3 main reasons:

1. There is a scar down the knee and this can often be painful when kneeling on it.
2. There will be an area on the outside part of the knee which is usually numb. Kneeling on a numb patch of skin can feel uncomfortable and care needs to be taken to avoid damaging the skin.
3. Deep knee bending is often difficult after knee replacement, therefore it may be difficult to get down and get up from kneeling.

If you have any concerns prior to your appointment please phone **09 521 9846** or email ortho@axissportsmedicine.co.nz

After hours or if the query is urgent you can contact Simon Young on **021 616 183** or email simon.young@auckland.ac.nz