

Anterior Cruciate Ligament Reconstruction (Primary)

Aintree University Hospital 
NHS Foundation Trust

Orthopaedic Surgery
Lower Lane
Liverpool L9 7AL
Tel:0151-525-5980

This information leaflet has been designed to give you advice and information about your recovery post procedure and discharge from the hospital.

We expect you to follow the instructions given to you by your healthcare team and to take responsibility for your own aftercare.

Please be assured that we will be available to contact if you have any problems or concerns from during your hospital stay and post your discharge from us.

After your Operation

- **Dressings**

You will have a large bandage to your knee that you will need to cut off 24 hours after your procedure. You do not need to attend a dressing clinic for this.

There will be no stitches underneath that need removing. The dressings are splash proof so you can shower once the bandage is removed.

Underneath you will have 2 small dressings that may be blood stained. If these need redressing, you can go to the dressing clinic at your local walk in centre and you should have been given details to arrange this by the nurse who discharged you.

- **Pain Relief**

You will be given pain relieving medications to take home with you, please take these as prescribed to prevent pain from building up to a level that is hard to control.

If you take any pain medications before your procedure it is vital to discuss these with your nurse and also your anaesthetist. This is so that we can reassess your pain relief to ensure that your pain is managed well after the surgery.

Regular pain medication may cause constipation so if you are not sent home with laxatives (bowel opening medication) please see your pharmacist.

- **Walking and Mobility**

You will have been seen by the physiotherapist following your procedure. You will be assessed on crutches and you will be shown how to use them safely and correctly.

You will then be shown how to go up and down stairs safely and correctly using the crutches or just a hand rail.

It is important to keep your knee moving after your operation so it doesn't get stiff. If you do a bit too much activity, your knee will swell up and be painful. If this happens, keep the knee moving but limit your activity within what your knee pain and swelling will allow.

The swelling can take 3-4 weeks to settle down – a little longer if you are pushing it too hard.

An ice pack may be useful if swelling is a problem. Make sure you wrap the ice pack/bag of frozen vegetable in a damp towel before placing on your knee. Keep it in place for upto 10 minutes. Be sure that you do not burn your skin. This can be put on for 10 minutes every hour.

Do not eat the bag of frozen vegetables once defrosted as this is not good for you and you could become ill.

It is also important to carry out the exercises listed below.

Exercises

The following exercises should be started immediately and continued at home. If once at home you are not sure how to carry out the exercises please ring the ward and a physiotherapist will speak to you.

These should be performed 4 times each day.

1. Long sitting. Put a band around your foot. Bend your knee as far as possible. Gently pull the band to bend your knee a little more.

Hold 5 secs. Repeat 10 times.



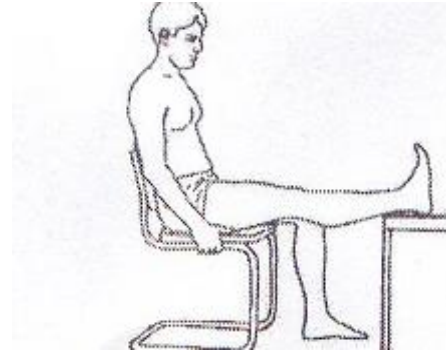
2. Lying on your back with legs straight. Bend your ankles and push your knees down firmly against the bed.

Hold 5 secs. Repeat 10 times.



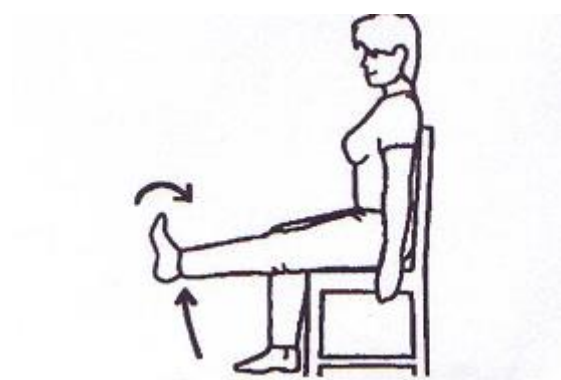
3. Sitting on a chair, with the leg to be exercised supported on a chair as shown. Let your leg straighten in this position.

Hold 5 secs. Repeat 10 times.



4. Sit on a chair. Pull your toes up, tighten your thigh muscle and straighten your knee.

Hold approx. 5 secs. And slowly relax your leg. Repeat 10 times.



At home it is important to walk as normally as possible.

For the first few days rest as much as possible (getting up and about for tea, toast and toilet) with your leg up on a stool and move your feet and ankles up and down to help your circulation.

Gradually increase your walking distance as pain and swelling allow.

- **Driving**

Driving is not permitted in the early post procedural stage. Please liaise with your healthcare team to discuss when you will be safe to return to driving. This is usually around 6 weeks post procedure.

You should notify your insurance company of the procedure that has been undertaken to ensure cover is valid.

- **Flying**

Flying is not permitted for around 6 – 8 weeks post surgery due to the risk of blood clots. You can also discuss this further with your consultant.

Post operative complications

VTE

VTE is a collective term for two conditions:

- DVT (deep vein thrombosis) – this is a blood clot most commonly found in a deep vein that blocks the flow of blood.
- PE (pulmonary embolism) – a potential fatal complication where a blood clot breaks free and travels to the lungs.

Whilst you are less mobile, especially during the first few weeks following your procedure, the risk of VTE is higher because of your immobility.

Your consultant may prescribe you a daily injection of heparin. This helps to thin your blood and should last approximately 14 days, a district nurse will visit to administer these injections or you can be shown how to administer them prior to your discharge.

Symptoms:

- Swelling – you will have some swelling due to your surgery but if you have any concerns please call for advice
- Pain – any new pain we want to know about
- Calf tenderness

- Heat and redness compared with the other leg
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain when breathing in

Things you can do to prevent VTE

- Move around as much as possible. Be sensible though, short and regular movement is best.
- Drink plenty of water to keep yourself hydrated
- We strongly advise you not to smoke – this will have been discussed in pre op but we can also refer you to our smoking cessation team within the Hospital.
- Move your ankle around as much as possible to keep your calf muscle pumping

Small preventative measures can have a huge impact on your recovery.

Infection

This is a very rare but serious complication. Your surgery is carried out in a strict infection free theatre.

You are given antibiotics at the time of your procedure to aid against infection prevention.

You are not routinely given antibiotics to go home with, but if you feel that your knee wounds are red, hot and a swelling please contact the ward or seek medical advice via fracture clinic or A + E.

Follow up Appointments

- You will see your consultant two weeks following surgery, and then six weeks following your procedure.
- You will also have a physiotherapy appointment arranged for you for one to two weeks post procedure.

Useful Contact Numbers

- **Ward 16**

Tel: 0151 529 3914/ 3527

Ward 16 is always open for advice

- **Fracture Clinic**

Tel: 0151 529 2554 (Monday – Friday)

Please leave a message on the answer machine stating your name and contact number and a member of staff will return your call

- **Day Case Surgical Unit**

0151 529 0118

- **NHS Direct**

111 from any landline or mobile phone free of charge. Some areas of the country are still covered by the 0845 4647 service.



If you require a special edition of this leaflet

This leaflet is available in large print, Braille, on audio tape or disk and in other languages on request. Please contact the Equality and Diversity Department on:

0151 529 4969

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