

University Orthopedics Division of Adult Reconstruction  
University Orthopedics Department of Physical Therapy

## **Total Knee Arthroplasty (TKA) POST-OP REHABILITATION PROTOCOL**

Post-Op Home Care Physical Therapy Guidelines: Weeks 0-2

### **1) General Guidelines**

- Physical Therapy is an essential and key part of patient recovery and is necessary for achieving optimal knee motion after Total Knee Replacement Surgery
- Before having surgery, patients scheduled for TKA will need to be sure that they can organize a ride for them to be transported to physical therapy at two weeks postop after they see their surgeon for their postop visit, as patients will not likely be able to drive themselves at this point in their recovery.
- Patients should share this protocol with their home Physical Therapist when they meet them after discharge from the hospital. Your home care therapist should start working on your knee motion IMMEDIATELY.
- **If your home care therapist is not working with you on your motion, or you feel you are not significantly progressing toward your goal of 0-90 degrees by 2 weeks postop, call your surgeon's office immediately during normal business hours and we will talk to your home care agency**
- Home care services should begin within 24 hours of discharge from the hospital, if this does not happen, notify your operating surgeon's office

- Expected duration of home care services is 2 weeks
- Home care physical therapy should be provided 2-3x/week
- You are expected to perform exercises daily on your own to work on knee motion, your walking, and balance

## 2) **Pain Control**

- Remember: pain is part of the normal healing process after surgery.
- The pain will improve day by day
- The first few days are the worst. Things will continue to heal and improve over the entire next year.
- It is common that knee pain should increase at the point of your arrival home as the pain block that we use during surgery wears off at about this time.
- This is normal and expected.
- Use ice on your knee for pain control: Apply bag of ice wrapped in a towel, 10 minutes on, 5 minutes off, repeat.
- Take your pain medicine as prescribed by your surgeon.
- Take your pain medication an hour before you start your home PT session to control pain and allow you to work hard with your therapist and achieve optimal motion.

## 2) **Knee Swelling**

- Ice and elevate the leg for pain control and to manage swelling (20 minutes; 3X/day)
- Compression stockings should be worn for one month postop. You may remove them at night while sleeping and briefly for hygiene and showering.

### 3) Knee Motion

- Knee straightening is emphasized IMMEDIATELY.
- Initially knee motion (bending and straightening) are emphasized more than strengthening
- Place a small towel roll under the heel to encourage straightening (and to prevent leg from rolling outward)
- **NEVER PLACE A PILLOW OR ROLL BEHIND YOUR KNEE EVER**
- The home care therapist should be stretching your leg (both straightening and bending)
- The home care therapist should be providing you with exercises to address knee straightening and knee bending to do on your own.
- Motion Goal at 2 weeks: knee fully straight and knee bent beyond a 90 degrees angle

### 4) Strengthening

- Focus on tightening your thigh muscle: isometric leg raises
- The home care therapist can provide you with more exercises for strength once the motion goal is achieved

### 5) Walking

- Put as much weight on the leg as you can tolerate.
- Use the walker or cane to allow you to unload the leg enough to walk comfortably, and with normal gait mechanics
- Goal: Progress from walker to cane by 2 weeks after surgery