

Lower limb info

Lower Limb Surgery Information sheet

Foot, ankle and knee surgery are specialised areas of surgery. The surgery can be quite challenging and every patient is different with unique needs and goals. You will need to follow instructions, perform appropriate exercises and modify your activities during your healing process.

This requires patience, persistence and a desire to get better. If you are unable to complete the post-operative instructions it will affect your results and you should consider alternative treatments. Successful results require a contribution from you.

This information package is intended to provide you with pre-operative, surgical and post-operative instructions in regard to your surgical procedure.

It is important that you read all of this information carefully and bring it with you when you come to hospital. If you have any questions or are not certain about the benefits, risks and limitations of your treatment ask your surgeon.

What do I take to Hospital?

1. Your X rays and other scans
2. Documentation about your:
 - Health Fund
 - Pathology Results
 - Medication
 - Relevant Doctors' letters
 - This information pack
3. Any questions that you have written down and wish to ask.

Will I need someone to take me home?

You must make arrangements for a responsible adult to take you home after your surgery. This is advisable if you have either had a day procedure or if you are in hospital for a period of time. It is strongly suggested that you have someone stay with you during the first 24 hours or until you are able to get around safely.

What should I wear?

Wear loose fitting clothes that are easy to put on and will fit over bulky bandages or surgical dressings. Leave any jewellery and valuables at home. Please remove make up and nail polish. Shower either the night before or the morning of your surgery. Pay particular care that your feet and nails are clean (especially for foot and ankle surgery).

Local Anaesthetic Block for Pain Management

A local anaesthetic block may be given to you during surgery. This will produce numbness around the nerves in the region of your surgical procedure. It will provide you with pain relief for approximately 8-12 hours post-operatively enabling you to be comfortable and allow you to sleep after your surgery.

Discharge Home

1. Plan to rest after surgery to minimise bleeding and swelling. Your particular instruction sheet will give you a specific period of time.
2. Have someone who is responsible available to take you home, as you will not be allowed to drive. Once you arrive home wait until you are hungry before eating. Begin with a light meal such as a sandwich/fruit/tea/coffee or juice. A heavy meal can cause nausea and vomiting after an operation. Take your medication for pain as directed. A physiotherapist may see you if required while you are in hospital to give you instruction as to walking, weight bearing, exercises and use of any aids. (eg. Crutches).

Once you can demonstrate that you can safely use crutches, able to negotiate stairs and pain relief is adequate, then you can go home.

These instructions are important in helping you rehabilitate from your surgery. Please follow them carefully. If there is anything you do not understand, please ask.

Rest

It is important that you rest and keep your foot elevated as much as possible for the first 7-10 days to encourage healing and discourage wound break down.

Pain Management

Pain is better treated before it arrives. A regular regime of pain killers taken in the post-operative phase is very important. It's recommended that you take regular Digesic , Panadeine Forte or other strong painkillers that have been prescribed to you , whilst pain is moderate to severe. After the initial period it is recommended that you take regular Panadol up until your post-operative visit. Two hours before going to bed take two painkillers to help you sleep.

Please take some painkillers 2 hours prior to your post-operative appointment.
If you have any problems taking any of these medications please let the medical staff know.
There is no need for you to be in constant pain.

Elevation

Swelling can delay wound healing and cause the wound to break down. Swelling can be due to over activity and not keeping your foot or leg elevated and this can also increase the risk of infection. Place your operated leg on two pillows so that it is above the level of your hip when you are lying down. The use of ice packs (or frozen peas, beans etc.) can be a very effective

way of reducing swelling. Place the ice pack in a towel over your ankle/ knee for 20 minutes 3-4 times per day.

Exercise

While you are resting it is important that you do passive gentle movement exercises. This is to encourage your blood flow, muscle strengthening and prevention of joint stiffness. The exercise information given to you by your surgeon or the physiotherapist is designed to help you with your rehabilitation and to gain the best results after surgery. Continue with your exercises once you are home and up until your post-operative appointment.

Dressings

Keep your bandages/cast clean and dry. Leave them intact until your post-operative appointment.

When showering/bathing, wrap the dressings or cast in a plastic kitchen or garbage bag and seal the top of the bag above your dressings with tape.

Post-Operative Problems

If after reading and following the post-operative instructions you are experiencing any of the following problems please call the rooms:

Infection

Wounds feel hot and tender. Unusual discharge from your wound or dressings or an odour from your dressings. Fever may be present and a general feeling of being unwell.

You may need to take medication such as antibiotics but please discuss this with your surgeon first. This is particularly important if you have had a joint replacement

Swelling

Swelling is not reduced with elevation of the leg. A change in colour of your toes or coldness. The calf muscle in your lower leg of the treated foot swells or is painful.

Bleeding

Your dressings are showing excessive amount of fresh blood.

Elevation and application of pressure dressings doesn't stop the bleeding.

Pain

The medication that has been prescribed for you is not helping control the pain while you have been resting with your limb elevated.

Medication

You are experiencing ill effects due to the medication that has been prescribed for pain eg. Nausea, vomiting, gastric discomfort.

This information is not intended to be all-inclusive, just helpful prior to your surgery. If you have any further questions please discuss them with your surgeon.