

TOTAL KNEE REPLACEMENT

PATIENT/FAMILY INFORMATION SHEET

What is a Total Knee Replacement?

Total knee replacement is also called knee joint replacement. It is surgery to replace a badly damaged knee joint with man-made parts. The artificial parts are called a prosthesis (prahs-thee-sis). The joint is made of metal or a mixture of metal and plastic.

The surgery is done to lessen pain and make moving easier. It is mostly for people with bad osteoarthritis or rheumatoid arthritis of the knee. Most knee replacements are successful and represent a positive change. However, it takes most patients at least 3-5 months to get back their strength and energy.

What Can I Do To Protect My New Joint?

You may need to wear a knee brace or splint for _____ days. It will help to protect your knee and keep it from moving too much so it can heal. You may take it off to shower. If the toes on your affected leg are numb and tingly, the brace may be too tight. Loosen the brace. Call your caregiver if the numbness and tingling do not go away.

In addition, you must be careful about how you move or place your affected leg. The reason for these safety measures is to keep your knee from coming out of position in the joint.

- Put a pillow between your legs when you lie down on your side.
- You may need to use a firm cushion to raise chair seats. Consider buying or renting a raised toilet seat.
- Sit only in chairs that have arms. When you get up from a chair, move to the edge and use the chair arms to help you stand up. Place your affected leg in front of your stronger leg. Push up with the strong leg, keeping your affected leg in front while getting up.

You will also need to wear TED hose (support socks). This will help promote circulation and lessen swelling in your legs until you are walking around more.

What Do I Need To Do For Follow-Up?

- Take your medications as prescribed (see discharge instruction form)
- You may bathe or shower when your staples are removed (14 days after surgery).
- Call your physician to schedule a follow-up visit.
- Antibiotics: After a total joint replacement you will always need to take prophylactic antibiotic before any major or minor procedure or if you have an infection. Bring the handout, "Prophylactic Antibiotics Following Joint Replacement" to your physician's office when scheduling a procedure or if you are being treated for an infection.

What Do I Need To Report to My Physician?

Although complications following total knee replacement surgery are uncommon, you need to be aware of those signs and symptoms that warrant a call to your physician.

Seek immediate care for the following:

- You have trouble breathing all of a sudden. This could be a sign that you have a blood clot in your lung. It could also mean that you are allergic to a medicine you are taking.
- You fall and injure your knee.
- Your affected leg or toes feel numb, tingly, cool to the touch, or look blue or pale.

Contact your orthopedic surgeon if you experience any of the following:

- Your stitches/staples are swollen, red or have drainage coming from them. This may mean that they are infected.
- Your stitches/staples come apart.
- You get a temperature over 101⁰ F.
- You have more pain in your knee or trouble moving around.
- You have questions or concerns about your surgery or medicine.

For more Patient Education Fact Sheets, see the Greenwich Hospital web site at www.greenhosp.org and click on Patients & Visitors, then Patient Education Rev. 9/04