

Recovering After Knee Replacement

A patient guide

MR TOFUNMI ONI · CONSULTANT ORTHOPAEDIC SURGEON · HIP & KNEE

A knee replacement asks a little more of you in the early weeks than a hip, mainly because the knee needs steady work to regain its movement. The effort pays off, and people who keep up with their exercises tend to get the best results. Recovery is gradual, and the timings here are a general guide rather than a target to hit exactly.

The first days

You will be helped to stand and walk soon after surgery, usually with crutches or a frame. The knee will feel swollen, warm and stiff at first, which is a normal part of healing. Ice, elevation and your prescribed pain relief all help to settle the swelling and make your exercises easier. Walking little and often, with rest in between, is the right rhythm.

The work that matters most

With a knee, regaining movement early is important, because a knee that is allowed to stay stiff is harder to free up later. Your physiotherapist will guide you, and the exercises below help between sessions. Do them gently and often.

- **Straightening.** Sit with your heel on a stool and let the knee relax down towards straight. Getting the knee fully straight matters just as much as bending it.
- **Bending.** Sitting in a chair, slide your foot back underneath you to bend the knee as far as is comfortable, hold for a few seconds, then slide it forward again.
- **Thigh squeezes and leg raises.** Tighten the thigh muscle and, with the knee straight, lift the whole leg a little way off the bed. A strong thigh supports and protects the new knee.

Looking after your wound

Keep the dressing clean and dry and follow the advice on when it can be changed. Some warmth and redness around a healing knee is normal and can last several weeks. Contact the practice if the wound becomes more red, hot or swollen, begins to leak, or if you feel unwell or feverish.

Getting back to normal

Most people are walking with a stick within a couple of weeks and off aids by around six weeks. Driving usually becomes possible once you can move the leg freely, control the pedals, and perform an emergency stop confidently, often around six weeks, and a little later for a right knee. Kneeling can feel uncomfortable

for some time, and for some people it stays that way, which is common and not a sign that anything is wrong. The knee keeps improving for a year or more, so patience and steady exercise are your best tools.

Keeping the blood moving

As with any leg surgery there is a small risk of a blood clot. Your ankle exercises, staying mobile and good hydration all help, alongside any stockings or medication you are given.

Call the practice straight away if: you notice new or one sided calf pain or swelling, sudden breathlessness or chest pain, or signs of a wound infection. These are uncommon but worth acting on promptly.

Mr Tofunmi Oni · libby.gibbs@horder.co.uk · **01892 362736**

This guide gives general information and is not a substitute for the personalised advice of Mr Oni and your physiotherapist. If you are worried about your symptoms or your recovery, please contact the practice.