



ARLINGTON ORTHOPEDICS

ACL Reconstruction FAQ'S

Frequently Asked Questions

- ❖ **Can I take a shower?** At 5 days after surgery, you may remove the dressings and take a shower. Remove the brace and the dressings while sitting in a chair. You may allow the leg to get wet after 5 days, but do not let the shower water hit the leg directly. **DO NOT REMOVE THE BUTTERFLY TAPES...THEY WILL BE REMOVED IN THE OFFICE.** No immersion in water is allowed for 21 days post op (that means NO BATHS!)

- ❖ **What is this small puncture wound on my thigh from?** We use a guide pin to place the ACL graft in the knee. The guide pin is used for a few minutes during the surgery and there are no lasting negative effects. There may be some soreness in this area for a few weeks after surgery.

- ❖ **When do I start therapy?** You must begin therapy as soon as possible after your first visit (unless otherwise). This means that you call for an appointment immediately after your first post-operative visit. Therapy can be done anywhere that is convenient and paid for by your insurance. A list of facilities is available at the office.

- ❖ **Do I have to be in the CPM machine for 6 hours?** You are NOT REQUIRED to be in this machine 6 hours per day. The CPM does nothing for your strength, but does aid significantly in your motion. Motion is very important! The general rule is that if you want to be up and around, then we encourage this activity. But if you want to lay around, then lay around in the machine!

- ❖ **Can I injure the ACL by bending my knee?** The ACL graft is placed in an isometric position. This means that the length of the graft does not change as the knee bends and straightens. You cannot injure the ACL graft by bending your knee.

- ❖ **Do I need to wear the brace in the CPM?** The brace is designed to allow you to wear it while in the CPM. When you set yourself in the CPM, unlock the brace to allow motion, but remember to lock it again before you begin to walk! For the first week, use the CPM machine with the brace ON. After the first week, remove the brace while in the CPM machine.
- ❖ **How long do I keep the CPM machine?** You keep the machine until you can do 90 degrees comfortable and are enrolled in formal rehabilitation. This is usually achieved 2 weeks after surgery.
- ❖ **Do I need this cold machine?** The main benefit of the cold machine is that it does not get as cold as ice, so you can leave it on all the time if you wanted to. Some patients like to use the cold machine all night while sleeping to control swelling and pain! If you would prefer to use a regular ice bag, that is acceptable. If you use an ice bag, you must limit its use to 20 minutes at a time with an hour between applications.
- ❖ **The cooling pad is bulky and uncomfortable. Do I have to wear it at all times?** During the first few days, the pad is buried inside the dressing and it is difficult to remove without removing the bandages (so we suggest that you keep it in place). After you remove the dressings you may still use the cooling pad, but we prefer that you only wear it when it is attached to the cooling unit. Wearing it all the time is unnecessary and will cause the leg to get too hot and uncomfortable since it is plastic.
- ❖ **Do I need to do any exercises prior to beginning formal physical therapy?** You may review and perform the exercises listed on the personal program sheet.
- ❖ **Do I need crutches?** We encourage full weight bearing immediately post op (unless instructed otherwise). This means that you may put full weight on the leg (with the leg brace locked in full extension). **YOU DO NOT NEED CRUTCHES!** We prefer that you put weight on the leg to maintain strength and encourage healing to occur.
- ❖ **My knee is really swollen, does it need to be aspirated?** Very few patients require aspiration (drainage of fluid from the knee) following ACL surgery. A few patients have excessive swelling and the area above the knee becomes tense and hard. If this happens to your knee, we will discuss the risks and benefits with you and we will decide together if your knee needs to be aspirated.

- ❖ **When do I get my stitches out?** Your stitches will be removed between 10-14 days after surgery.

- ❖ **Do I need pain medication?** Most patients use pain medication for the first few days after surgery. Most patients change over to Tylenol after the first week to 10 days, although some patients require pain medication for longer periods of time.

- ❖ **How long do I need this brace?** The brace is used to give you support so that you don't need crutches. Initially, you lack the strength to stand and so the brace enables you to stand and walk. For the first three weeks, you will need to keep the brace locked while walking. You may remove the brace when you are resting (not walking) at home in order to give the knee a chance to "breathe". At three weeks post op, you should unlock the brace to walk. This will give you stability as you begin to walk and get used to bending the knee. This will also build up some more strength before you remove the brace completely. At four weeks, you may wean yourself from the brace altogether. You may begin not wearing it at home in a controlled setting, and then gradually lessen its use over the next few days to a week.

- ❖ **When will my appointment be?** Routine appointments after surgery occur at 10-14 days, 6 weeks, 3 months, 6 months and 1 year.

- ❖ **Can I drive?** If surgery was performed on your left leg and you drive an automatic transmission vehicle, you may drive about 3 days after surgery as long as you are not taking the narcotic pain medication. If you had surgery on your right leg, or drive a manual transmission, you may drive when you have adequate strength in the leg. This usually occurs at 3 weeks when you are able to unlock the brace to walk. We recommend you test your driving ability in an empty parking lot with supervision until you determine whether or not you are able to drive safely.

- ❖ **Can I get a note for school or work?** Notes for missing school and work are available upon request at the office.