Knee arthroscopy - discharge

When You Were in the Hospital

You had surgery to check for problems in your knee (knee arthroscopy). You may have been checked for:

- Torn meniscus. Meniscus is cartilage that cushions the space between the bones in the knee. Surgery is done to repair or remove it.
- Torn or damaged anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) or posterior cruciate ligament (PCL)
- Inflamed or damaged lining of the joint. This lining is called the synovium.
- Misalignment of the kneecap (patella). Misalignment puts the kneecap out of position.
- Small pieces of broken cartilage in the knee joint
- Baker's cyst. This is a swelling behind the knee that is filled with fluid. Sometimes this occurs when there is inflammation (soreness and pain) from other causes, like arthritis. The cyst can be removed during this surgery.
- Some fractures of the bones of the knee

What to Expect at Home

You may be able to put weight on your knee in the first week after having this surgery. Most people can return to their normal activities within the first month. You may need to be on crutches for a while. Ask your health care provider if there are activities you should limit.

If you have a more complicated knee arthroscopy procedure, you may not be able to walk for several weeks. You may also need to use crutches or a knee brace. Full recovery may take several months to a year.

Pain

Pain is normal after knee arthroscopy. It should get better over time.

You will get a prescription for pain medicine. Get it filled when you go home so that you have it when you need it. Take your pain medicine as soon as pain starts. This will prevent it from getting too bad.

You may have received a nerve block, so you don't feel pain during and after surgery. Make sure you take your pain medicine. The nerve block will wear off, and pain can return very quickly.

Taking ibuprofen or another anti-inflammatory medicine may also help. Ask your provider what other medicines are safe to take with your pain medicine.

DO NOT drive if you are taking narcotic pain medicine. This medicine may make you too sleepy to drive safely.

Activity

Your provider will ask you to rest when you first go home. Keep your leg propped up on 1 or 2 pillows. Place the pillows under your foot or calf muscle. This helps control swelling in your knee.

For most procedures, you may start to put weight on your leg soon after surgery, unless your provider tells you not to. You should:

- Start slowly by walking around the house. You may need to use crutches at first to help you keep from putting too much weight on your knee.
- Try not to stand for long periods.
- Do any exercises your provider taught you.
- DO NOT jog, swim, do aerobics, or ride a bicycle until your doctor tells you it is ok.

Ask your provider when you can return to work or drive again.

Wound Care

You will have a dressing and an ace bandage around your knee when you go home. DO NOT remove these until your provider says it is ok. Keep the dressing and bandage clean and dry.

Place an ice pack on your knee 4 to 6 times a day for the first 2 or 3 days. Be careful not to get the dressing wet. DO NOT use a heating pad.

Keep the ace bandage on until your provider tells you it is okay to remove it.

- If you need to change your dressing for any reason, put the ace bandage back on over the new dressing.
- Wrap the ace bandage loosely around your knee. Start from the calf and wrap it around your leg and knee.
- DO NOT wrap it too tightly.

When you shower, wrap your leg in plastic to keep it from getting wet until your stitches or tape (Steri-Strips) have been removed. After that, you may get the incisions wet when you shower. Be sure to dry the area well.

When to Call the Doctor

Call your health care provider if:

- Blood is soaking through your dressing, and the bleeding does not stop when you put pressure on the area.
- Pain does not go away after you take pain medicine or is getting worse with time.
- You have swelling or pain in your calf muscle.
- Your foot or toes look darker than normal or are cool to the touch.
- You have redness, pain, swelling, or yellowish discharge from your incisions.
- You have a temperature higher than 101°F (38.3°C).

Knee scope - arthroscopic lateral retinacular release - discharge; Synovectomy - discharge; Patellar debridement - discharge; Meniscus repair - discharge; Lateral release - discharge; Collateral ligament repair - discharge; Knee surgery - discharge