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JOINT REPLACEMENT SURGERY POST-OP INSTRUCTIONS

With less invasive joint replacement surgery the importance of immediate aggressive rehab and therapy is much less than in the past.

Although you will be having one or two Home physical therapy sessions within the first five days after surgery during this critical period for wound healing these exercises are NOT your focus.

Instead your priority for the first 5 to 7 days after surgery is controlling swelling and bleeding (which usually gets worse the first 5 days after surgery).

Controlling and limiting this swelling and bruising is important for good early wound healing which in turn helps to lessen the risk of infection.

How do you keep the swelling and bruising down?

The answer is to focus on FOUR things... elevation of your leg; rest; compression of the wound; and icing the wound.

Elevation is THE MOST IMPORTANT thing. You must keep your leg and knee ABOVE YOUR HEART. To do this you must be in bed with the leg raised on a pillow or a foam leg elevator that you can buy on Amazon. The other way is in a recliner chair reclined back as far as it can go with the leg again propped up on pillows or a foam wedge.

Sitting in a chair with your leg up on an ottoman is NOT ACCEPTABLE as it does not elevate your leg above your heart.

We recommend elevating your leg for 20 of the 24 hours in a day for the first 5 days after surgery (YES that much time!!!)

The second most important way to control swelling is to rest your body... sleep, read a book, watch a movie or meditate. This helps your body to recover from the stress of surgery and also decreases swelling and bleeding at the site of surgery.

The third technique to control swelling is COMPRESSION.

For hip replacement patients this means wearing tight shorts that extend to the mid-thigh. Examples are biking shorts, girdles, spanx, or exercise compression shorts. Wear

them at ALL times except for showering for the first two weeks after surgery

For knee replacement patients this means using one or two 6 inch wide ace bandages to wrap the knee. The knee should be wrapped snugly but not too tight. The ace wrap should stay on for at least 20 hours per day for the first two weeks after surgery... you can remove it for showers and knee exercises

Both hip and knee replacement patients should also wear calf high compression socks/stockings at all times except for showers (yes even for sleeping!) for the first two weeks after surgery.

The last technique to control swelling is to apply ice to the wound, this is surprisingly the least important of the steps, you should apply ice round the clock for the first 5 to 7 days after surgery... 20 minutes on then 40 minutes off, you can skip the hours you are sleeping.

Ice should never be applied directly to the skin, it can be outside your compression shorts if you had a hip replacement or outside one or two wraps of the ace bandage if you had a knee replacement. A great technique for knees is to wrap the first ace bandage around the knee, then put the ice bag on the knee and then wrap the ice bag snugly in place around the knee with the second ace bandage

Remember all this time spent elevating, resting, compressing and icing your surgery site still leaves you with 4 hours per day for exercises, walking, showering, eating etc. We suggest breaking these four hours down into 4 separate one hour sessions per day.

Lastly there is one exercise you MUST DO EVERY HOUR when you are awake. This is the CALF PUMP EXERCISE ...flexing and extending your ankle up and down strongly at least 30 times. This exercise helps to pump blood through your leg and is part of preventing blood clots which can develop after joint replacement surgery. This exercise will NOT increase wound swelling.

If you lose this instruction sheet a copy is posted on the Shore Orthopedic website (shoreorthodocs.com) under the Patient Resources tab, select Patient Education/Post-op Instructions.

If you have additional questions about these instructions please ask your nurse or therapist before being discharged.

Lastly once you are home if you have more questions or problems please call Dr. Zabinski's physician assistant Julie at 609-927-1991 Ext 243.