

After Knee Replacement Surgery: 1 to 12 Weeks

Notes:

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here:
<https://library.nshealth.ca/Patients-Guides>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

Prepared by: Physiotherapy
Designed by: Nova Scotia Health Library Services

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- Fully straighten your knee.
- Sit and stand from a chair.
- Go up and down stairs using a handrail.
- Walk longer distances without limping, using only a cane or no walking aid at all.
- Ride a stationary exercise bike.

Remember:

It is normal for swelling, stiffness, and pain to come and go for several months after surgery. You may have more pain and swelling as you start new exercises or spend more time on your feet. See page 1 for tips on managing your pain.

What are your questions?

Please ask a member of your health care team. We are here to help you.

- Go for short walks outside (like 4 to 6 blocks or 15 to 30 minutes) using your walking aid. Slowly do more each day (either by going further or for longer each time).
 - › Your walking goal may be different depending on how much you walked before your surgery.

Goals for week 12:

- Bend your knee 120 degrees or more.



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To help control pain and swelling:

- Change your position every 20 minutes and take short walks.
- **Elevate your knee often:** Use pillows to keep your operated knee raised above your heart.
 - › Place the pillows under your leg, not just under your knee.
 - › Keep your knee as straight as you can.
 - › Try to keep your knee raised for 15 minutes after exercising, and as needed during the day.



- Move your ankles throughout the day. This keeps the blood flowing.

- **Use ice:** Wrap an ice pack or a bag of frozen vegetables in a towel. Put it on your knee for 15 to 20 minutes after exercising, and when your knee hurts.
- **Do not use ice if:**
 - › you cannot feel heat or cold on the skin around your knee.
 - › you have been told not to.
- **Do not use heat until your physiotherapist says it is OK.**
- **Take pain medication as told by your doctor.**
- **If you are not able to manage the pain, or if it is not getting better:**
 - › Talk with your primary health care provider, Prehab Clinic Team, physiotherapist, or pharmacist.
- **Sleep:** You may have trouble sleeping for up to 12 weeks after your surgery. This is common.
 - › If you sleep on your side, put a pillow between your knees.
 - › If you sleep on your back, **do not put a pillow under your operated knee.** This may cause your knee to heal in a bent position.

Using a walking aid

- Use the walking aid (like a walker, crutches, or a cane) that your physiotherapist measured for you.
- **Do not** stop using it or start using a different walking aid without talking to your physiotherapist first.
- A walking aid can help to:
 - › Lower stress on your knee joint
 - › Lower pain
 - › Improve how you walk
 - › Help your balance and prevent falls

When you are sitting or resting:

- Keep your knee either as straight as possible or as bent as possible. If this is not comfortable, bend and straighten your knee a few times to help relieve the pain.

Goals for week 8:

- Bend your knee at least 110 degrees.
- Straighten your knee so that you can place no more than 3 fingers behind it when lying down.