



Patient & Family Guide
2020

After Orthopedic Surgery



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After Orthopedic Surgery

Type of surgery:

Pain control

- Pain is normal after surgery. When you are discharged, your pain should be controlled and be a 4 or less on the pain scale of 0 to 10. **Controlling your pain helps with your healing.**
- You may be given a prescription for pain pills.
- You may try acetaminophen (Tylenol®) to help with pain or discomfort.
- **Do not drink alcohol while taking pain pills.**
- You can expect to have some swelling – this is normal. You can use an ice pack (or a bag of frozen peas) every 4 hours while awake. **Do not leave it on for more than 30 minutes at a time.** Keep using ice packs while you have swelling (about 3 to 5 days).

To help control your pain:

- › Take your pain medication **before** your pain starts. It's harder to control your pain if you wait too long before taking your medication.
- › Take your pain medication 30 to 45 minutes before doing more activity or your home exercises, if you were given some to do by physiotherapy staff.
- › Don't use anti-inflammatory medications such as Advil® or Motrin® unless you checked with your nurse, doctor, or pharmacist that it's OK.
- › Over-the-counter acetaminophen (Tylenol®) will help lower your pain. Please check with your nurse, doctor, or pharmacist about how much you can take.
- Please contact your health care provider or a walk-in clinic if you have uncontrolled pain, nausea (feeling sick to your stomach), or dizziness.

Constipation

- Using pain medication and moving less can make it harder to have a normal bowel movement. Keeping track of your bowel movements is very important.

Tips to prevent constipation:

- › If you were started on laxatives or stool softeners in the hospital, you may need to keep taking these after you go home. You can buy laxatives or stool softeners over the counter at your local pharmacy. If you have any questions, talk with your pharmacist.
- › Do not ignore the feeling that you need to have a bowel movement.
- › Eat more fibre (e.g., whole grain breads, muffins and cereals made with bran, fruits and vegetables, baked beans, prunes, peas).
- › Eat breakfast every day. This helps your bowels work better.
- › Drink at least 6 large glasses of fluids each day.
- › Exercise regularly based on what your surgeon and physiotherapist recommend.

Activity

- Allowed up as comfortable
- Keep the operated limb elevated (raised up)
- No weight bearing on operated limb
- Walking aid needed (e.g., walker, cane, crutches)
- Weight bearing partial with crutches
- No strenuous (hard) exercises or activity until after your followup.
- If you have any questions about driving or going back to work, please talk with your surgeon.

Dressing

- Leave in place until your next surgeon's visit
- Can be removed after _____ days
- Do not shower for 48 hours (2 days).
- After 48 hours, with a properly covered cast or dressing, you may have a shower.
 - › For best results, buy a cast cover for your operated limb at a pharmacy.
 - › If you don't have a cast cover, you can wrap a plastic bag over your dressing or cast to keep it dry while showering.

- **Do not soak in the tub or swim** until after your next surgeon's visit.

Stitches/Staples

- Your stitches or staples are to be removed after ____ days
 - By your family health care provider
 - By your surgeon at your followup appointment
- If you have Steri-Strips™ (strips of cloth tape) over your incision (cut), they should stay in place for 7 to 10 days. You may cover them with a bandage so your incision is not rubbed by your clothing.

If you have bleeding:

- Place your hand over the dressing and press firmly.
- Place your affected limb up on pillows above the level of your heart, if possible.

Contact your surgeon if the bleeding continues.

If you have severe (really bad) bleeding, go to the nearest Emergency Department right away.

Things to watch for

Contact your surgeon or family health care provider right away if you have:

- › fever or chills
- › drainage from the incision that smells bad or is not clear
- › separation (coming apart) of the edges of the incision
- › redness
- › numbness or tingling in the operated limb
- › unusual colour, such as white or blue fingers or toes, on the operated limb
- › pain that is not helped by medication

Go to the nearest Emergency Department if you have:

- › pain in the calf of your leg that does not get better with movement or massage
- › shortness of breath
- › pain in your chest

Followup appointment:

Doctor: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

Contact

Orthopedic Clinic

4th floor, Halifax Infirmary

Phone: 902-473-1501

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Learn about other programs and services in your community: call 211 or visit <http://ns.211.ca>

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The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.