



Megan Wolf, MD-Orthopaedic Surgery

Perioperative FAQ's for the Knee and Lower Extremity

Do I need to quit smoking prior to surgery?

We encourage all tobacco users to quit 6 weeks prior to surgery. Tobacco use not only increases your risk for infection, but also delays bone growth and soft tissue healing. It is also highly important to remain tobacco-free for a minimum of 6 months after surgery to increase your chances of success post-operatively.

How can I reduce swelling after the surgery?

There are multiple methods to help you reduce swelling after your surgery. They include the following:

- Elevating your affected limb at or above heart level
- Ankle pumps (rotating your ankle, as well as moving your foot up and down)
- Continuous use of TED hose stockings
- Ice Machine available for purchase (ask your surgeon for more details)

How long do I have to wear the TED hose (surgical stockings)?

TED hose are optional after lower extremity surgery. They are beneficial if you have venous insufficiency or prolonged swelling after surgery. TED hose stockings aid in preventing lower extremity swelling and decreasing your risk for a DVT (deep vein thrombosis—also known as a blood clot). These stockings are worn on both legs with or without crutches during the early postoperative period, approximately 2 weeks. If swelling persists, they can be worn for a longer period of time. Stockings may be removed daily to wash and dry; however, be advised that they should be placed back on the lower extremities as quickly as possible. Additional sets of TED hose may be purchased at the pharmacy.

How often do I use the DonJoy Ice Machine?

Icing is an important part to reducing swelling and pain after your surgery. We recommend using the ice machine 5-6 times daily for 20- to 30-minute sessions for 2-6 weeks post-operatively. When icing, we recommend 30 min to 1 hour breaks between icing sessions and wearing a protective layer between your skin and the ice machine.

How often do I do dressing changes at home (no splint)?

Dressing changes are a vital part of your post-surgical process. If you do NOT have a splint (hard dressing), maintain surgical dressing for 3 days post-op, then begin regular dressing changes. Band-aids should be placed over portal sites and changed daily. If you have a larger incision, cover it with gauze and tape or an ace wrap, and change daily. At each dressing change, evaluate the incision sites for any purulent drainage (pus), excessive redness, increased warmth, or pain. These signs may indicate an infection. Contact a team member IMMEDIATELY if these symptoms occur. If steri-strips (tape) are in place, do not touch or remove the steri-strips (tape) that are over the arthroscopic portals or skin incisions. Steri-strips are to remain on the incision sites for 2 weeks. If they fall off before the 2 week time period is up, that is ok. DO NOT put ointment, hydrogen peroxide, or any other topical cream over the incision(s).

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When can I bath/shower or get my incision wet?

In order to reduce the risk of infection, it is crucial that you maintain a dry environment for your incisions for the first 2 weeks. Maintain your postoperative dressing for 3 days after surgery. Once the dressing is removed, you may shower letting soap and water run over the incision. Do not scrub the incision or allow it to soak in water. Dry the incision carefully after the shower. Maintain a clean and dry environment around the incision. Do not soak in a pool, bath, or hot tub for up to one month after the surgical procedure. Shower bags are available for purchase from your local pharmacy if you wish to use one to keep the incision dry.

When do I have my sutures (stitches) or staples removed?

Our surgical team uses various methods of wound closure after a surgical procedure. Sometimes, we use a dissolvable suture with skin glue which requires no special care because the sutures are underneath your skin and will dissolve on their own. If you do have an incision, suture or staple material may be on the outside of the skin. These sutures/staples will need to be removed at 2 weeks postoperatively which can be done in our office during your follow up visit.

Why do I have to take a blood thinner and for how long?

Any orthopaedic surgery is a risk factor for developing a blood clot, also known as a DVT (deep vein thrombosis). Our team is highly attentive to this risk and proactive at preventing blood clots. In order to decrease the chance of a blood clot, patients are placed on one of two blood thinners depending on their weight bearing status post-operatively. The type of medication you will be placed on will be discussed during your pre-operative visit. Please notify our providers if you are on any hormone medications (including birth control) or if you have any personal or family history of blood clots or blood clotting disorders as these also increase your risk for blood clots.

What are signs of a blood clot and what do I do if I suspect one?

Signs of a blood clot include the following:

- Severe calf/leg swelling or diffuse redness
- Severe calf pain with moving foot up/down or when squeezing the calf.

If these symptoms arise, please contact our office immediately. We will need to order an ultrasound of your leg to rule out a blood clot. Our team is available Monday-Friday 9am to 4pm. If you are calling after business hours, please contact our main line at **336-903-7845 (Wilkesboro)** or **336-716-8091 (Winston Salem)** to reach our on-call fellow physician. NEVER massage calf pain!

** If you develop chest pain or difficulty breathing, call 911 IMMEDIATELY! **

Is bruising normal after knee surgery?

After any surgical procedure it is common to have localized bruising. Occasionally patients get a significant amount of bruising due to the tourniquet used during the operative procedure. The bruising typically begins in the thigh and will move down the leg, it may present up 2-3 days after surgery. Gentle massage of the bruised area and elevation with ankle pumps will help to disseminate the pooled blood and will also decrease any discomfort it may cause.

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What are signs of an infection and what do I do if I suspect one?

While infection is not common, there is always a risk with any type of surgery. Contact our office immediately at **336-903-7845 (Wilkesboro)** or **336-716-8091 (Winston Salem)** if you develop the following signs:

- Fever of 101.5 degrees F or higher
- Purulent drainage (pus), excessive redness or swelling around the incision site(s).

When can I return to driving after knee surgery?

For return to driving after knee surgery, this is a common question that is not always easy to address. The requirements are:

- To be free from narcotic pain medication
- Not be seen as an impaired driver by state and local law (use of a knee brace/crutches is an area of controversy)
- Driving position cannot violate ROM restrictions
- Follow the guidelines and limitations of your rehabilitation protocol to prevent re-injury
- Remain in accordance with state DMV guidelines

With all that said, I understand that my patients don't always have assistance with transportation readily available, so I always encourage them to be mindful of their safety (and those around them) before getting back on the road.

What if I need to refill on a medication?

Pain medication and all other medication prescriptions (anti-nausea, anti-constipation, and blood thinners) are provided on the day of discharge for inpatient surgeries, or the operative day for outpatient surgery. These medications will be E-prescribed to the pharmacy on file. **Please ensure that we have up to date pharmacy information.** If you require a refill on any of these medications, please contact our office during business hours. Keep in mind it may take up to 72 hours to get a pain medication refill.

*While our team takes your concerns very seriously, we are devoted to the national effort in decreasing the opioid addiction epidemic. We abide by strict guidelines provided by the CDC. *

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May I take anti-inflammatory medicines after the surgery?

Anti-inflammatories have been shown to delay bone healing and interfere with ligament graft healing. If needed, patients may use anti-inflammatories (NSAIDs—such as ibuprofen, naproxen, Advil, etc.) for additional pain control. These medications may be taken as directed between the pain medication prescriptions.

- If platelet rich plasma (PRP) was part of your surgical procedure, we ask that you avoid anti-inflammatories for 2 weeks after surgery.
- While we provide you pain medication for the first weeks after surgery, we recommend that patients transition to Tylenol (acetaminophen) for pain relief. Tylenol is not to be taken in conjunction with Norco or Percocet because these medications contain the same ingredient (acetaminophen). The maximum daily dosage for Tylenol should not exceed 4000mg (or 4 grams) per day as this can cause permanent liver damage.

How much weight can I bear on my leg after surgery?

Weight bearing status is dependent on both the type of surgery and anesthesia you will undergo. If you decide to have a nerve block during surgery, you will be placed in a knee brace with non-weight bearing status until the nerve block has worn off. We will discuss your weight bearing limitations during your pre-operative visit and again after your surgery. Your postoperative instructions have additional information regarding weight bearing status. Beginning physical therapy within 7-10 days is also beneficial as the physical therapists will also help instruct you on the proper use of your crutches to ambulate.

How do I obtain braces/crutches and for how long am I supposed to wear my brace/knee immobilizer?

Details regarding the duration you are to wear your brace will be discussed during your pre-operative visit, and throughout your recovery process during post-operative clinical visits. Any required postoperative braces or crutches will be fitted and provided at your pre-operative appointment or the day of your surgery. If you have any issues with your brace/crutches, we have an in-house team that will help you with any adjustments you may need upon your next clinical visit with us. If you have concerns that you may need a brace for your surgery, please call **336-903-7845 (Wilkesboro)** or **336-716-8091 (Winston Salem)** to inquire.

How soon do I start physical therapy?

Physical therapy is started the day after surgery with gentle range of motion exercises provided in your discharge summary. In general, we recommend beginning physical therapy in the first 7-10 days. The physical therapist will create a plan for additional visits 2-5 times per week dependent upon your surgical procedure. They will work on exercises specific to your rehabilitation and also guide a home exercise program. Your physical therapy protocol will detail what specific activities you can perform at different time frames during your rehab. Follow these instructions and DO NOT ADVANCE or let your Physical Therapist advance your protocol beyond the normal time frames unless directed so by Dr. Wolf.

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Do I need a prescription for physical therapy at WFBMC?

We send orders for all physical therapy sessions that occur at Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist immediately after the surgery. A prescription can be provided during your preoperative visit for a Physical Therapist of your choice. If you would like an external referral, please notify a staff member and we will be happy to provide this for you. The prescription prescribes 2-5 sessions weekly for a total of 6 weeks and will be renewed based on rehabilitation protocol and personal progress.

When is my first postoperative visit with the team?

Dr. Wolf's team performs rounds on all in-hospital patients the day after surgery. The team will discuss activities of daily living, and there will be an opportunity to have any further questions answered. The first postoperative visit is 1.5-2 weeks after surgery. If you have any questions prior to your first follow-up visit, we are always available throughout your recovery process to address your concerns and can be reached at **336-903-7845 (Wilkesboro)** or **336-716-8091 (Winston Salem)**.

What is the expected timeline for post-op office visits with Dr. Wolf?

Dr. Wolf would ideally like to see each of her patients for post-operative office visits with the following timeline below:

- 1-2 weeks (At 2 weeks, suture removal is performed. This is typically with our RN, ATC, or PA-C. If you are not able to make this visit, we recommend you follow up with your primary care provider for post-op wound care).
- 6-8 weeks (Depending on procedure type)
- 3 months
- 6 months
- 12 months
- Annually (for osteotomies, meniscal transplants, fresh allografts, and ligament reconstructions)

How do I obtain a handicap parking pass?

Patients are eligible for temporary handicap parking passes based on the type of surgery they undergo. If you are in need of a handicap parking pass and are eligible, please ask a member of Dr. Wolf's team prior to surgery, and we will provide you with an application. The application will need to be completed and sent by you to your state DMV.

How do I get FMLA/Disability paperwork completed?

If you need FMLA (Family & Medical Leave Act), Disability, or Worker's Compensation paperwork completed, please fax all forms to **336-903-7841 (Wilkesboro)** or **336-716-8044 (Winston Salem)**.

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What is your phone policy?

Dr. Wolf's team is happy to answer any concerns or questions you may have. Our office hours are Monday-Friday 8am to 4pm. Dr. Wolf's team can be reached at **336-903-7845 (Wilkesboro)** or **336-716-8091 (Winston Salem)**. If you require assistance after hours, holidays, or weekends, please call the same number to reach our on-call answering service and fellow physician. Additionally, we are available online through MyWakeHealth (MyChart).

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