



Physiotherapy Department

Post knee replacement symptom checker



It is important you know what **normal** post operative symptoms are and what the symptoms are of **post operative complications**.

This booklet will cover how to manage normal post operative symptoms and what to do if you are showing signs of post operative complications to help support your recovery.

Normal post operative symptoms

Following a total knee replacement it is normal to experience:

1

Pain

Around the operated knee and possibly along the bone line of the shin and thigh bone. This may also radiate into your thigh muscles, calf and buttocks. This may take several weeks to improve. Take regular pain relief to keep pain score 1 or below as you get moving.

Score: 0=none 1=mild 2=moderate 3=severe

2

Swelling

You will have some swelling of the operated knee, the calf and ankle. It may take a few months for swelling to resolve – this can be managed with regular ice, elevation and by keeping active.

3

Bruising

This often looks worse than it is. It may be localised to the knee, track down the leg to the ankle, sometimes it can appear in the thigh. This should settle within a few weeks on its own.

4

Inflammation

Mild redness, heat and wound ooze is part of the healing process following surgery. It should settle within a few weeks. Ice and anti-inflammatories can help. If symptoms don't settle, please call the Elective Orthopaedic Unit for further advice on **01305 255562**.

5

Weakness

It takes a few months to build muscle strength and confidence in your new knee. It is important to keep your pain under control and ensure you are keeping active by completing your physiotherapy exercises and gently increasing your mobility as pain allows.

6

Post Op Numbness

Following a knee replacement, it is usual to have a numb area on the outside of your knee due to the incision. Although this usually reduces over time a small area often remains permanently numb.

7

Rehabilitation

It is important post total knee replacement to keep your pain under control, so you can maximise your engagement in rehabilitation. This may involve discussion with a pharmacist or GP if you feel over the counter medications are not controlling your pain well enough to engage in your exercises.

Symptoms of post operative complications

Although uncommon post operative complications can occur. Please ensure you are aware of the following symptoms:

Infection

1

If you have a fever or flu symptoms and redness around the wound, it's important to ring the Elective Orthopaedic Unit for advice – we would want a medical review quickly to check for wound/joint infection.

Deep vein thrombosis (DVT)

2

DVT is a blood clot in your leg veins. If you have swelling in one leg/calf, throbbing leg/calf pain, warmth, redness/darkening of skin or swollen veins tender touch please call the Elective Orthopaedic Unit for advice – we would want you to be assessed and start treatment quickly.

Pulmonary Embolism (PE)

3

PE is a blood clot in an artery in the lungs and needs emergency treatment. Symptoms are the same as for a DVT with the addition of breathlessness, chest pain, increased or irregular heart rate or dizziness. **Please call 999 for medical input if you experience these symptoms.**

Recovery timeline:

Bone healing on average is **6-8 weeks**. **Soft tissue healing** can take **6-12 weeks**. You may still feel post operative symptoms beyond this, but we would expect symptoms to be improving within this timescale.

Your wound has been closed with metal skin clips, and these will be removed after about 2 weeks. Following this your wound should continue to dry up and scab over. The scar line will gradually fade over time.

Occasionally this process is interrupted. If you are concerned about your wound healing, redness, heat or any ongoing ooze, please contact the

Ridgeway Elective Orthopaedic Unit on 01305 255562.

You should expect your recovery to feel as follows:

3 months to be FAIR

6 months to be GOOD

12 months to be RIGHT

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