Anterior Cruciate Ligament Reconstruction

An information guide for patients

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Introduction
If you tear the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) in your knee, you may need to have reconstructive surgery. The ACL is a tough band of tissue joining the thigh bone to the shin bone at the knee joint. It runs diagonally through the inside of the knee and gives the knee joint stability. It also helps to control the back-and-forth movement of the lower leg.

For further information please visit the following website;
www.nhs.uk/Conditions/repairtotendon/Pages/Introduction.aspx

After the operation
After your operation you will wake up in the recovery room. Your knee will have dressings on and you may also have one or two drains.

A nerve block may be used during the procedure, which means that after the operation the leg may feel numb.

If a pillow is placed under your leg this must be under your heel and NOT your knee to encourage the knee to be straight.

Pain and swelling
It is normal to feel some pain following your operation. You will be given some painkillers and/or anti-inflammatory medication to take in the days following the operation. It is important to take these painkillers as directed.

It is essential to control your knee swelling following surgery to improve your recovery. Use ice on your knee to reduce pain and swelling. Wrap a bag of crushed ice, or frozen peas in a damp towel. Protect your dressings from getting wet with a layer of cling film, or a plastic bag, before applying the ice pack for 10-15 minutes at a time. Repeat this regularly throughout the day.
**Wound care**

The dressings, bandages and wound need to stay clean and dry. If you have removable stitches they will be removed after 10-14 days at an outpatient clinic appointment or at your GP practice. If dissolvable stitches are used, they will not need to be removed.

**YOU MUST CONTACT YOUR GP OR ATTEND ACCIDENT AND EMERGENCY IF:**

- Your knee becomes very red and hot
- Your knee becomes very swollen
- Your pain increases severely

**Rehabilitation**

**Goals/Milestones**

Following your anterior cruciate ligament reconstruction there are specific milestones you need to achieve to ensure the best recovery.

- By 2 weeks you should be able to fully straighten your knee and bend it to 90 degrees with minimal knee swelling.
- By 2 weeks it is expected that you will be walking without crutches or using crutches only for longer distances. You should not be walking with a bent knee.
- The amount of swelling on your knee after the first 3 weeks of the operation affects the longer term development of muscle bulk that is required following your surgery to allow you to return to general daily activities, work and sport.

**Post-operative Physiotherapy**

- You will be seen by a Physiotherapist in Hospital before you are discharged. You will be provided with and shown how to use crutches correctly.
- An anterior cruciate ligament reconstruction is a significant operation. You must ensure that you take plenty of rest during the first 2 weeks. Your activity levels need to be significantly reduced and you should not be walking/standing for prolonged periods.
• Your knee may swell after activity. It is important that you monitor your swelling closely especially first thing in the morning and after activity.

• Your leg should be elevated when not exercising or walking. This is to reduce swelling and pain, which will slow your rehabilitation.

• To ensure that you achieve or maintain a fully straight knee, you will need to sit or lie with a pillow or support under your heel (not your knee) for 5 minute intervals regularly during the day as described later in the exercises.

• You will not be able to drive or return to work initially. A return to driving must be discussed with your surgeon. Returning to work will be dependent on your occupation. If you have any concerns please discuss these with your surgeon or physiotherapist.

• You should not swim until the wound is dry. If you go swimming, you should not do breast stroke until agreed with your Surgeon or Physiotherapist.

• You will be referred to your local physiotherapy department for out-patient physiotherapy at:

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• If you have not heard from your local physiotherapy department within one week please contact them directly in the first instance. Should further assistance be required please contact the physiotherapy department at QEHB (0121 371 3428).
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Post-Operative Exercises

1. When resting, ensure your operated knee remains in a straight position. This is best achieved by placing your heel on a pillow/cushion.

2. Sit or lie with the operated leg straight. Tighten the quadriceps muscles on front of the thigh by trying to push the knee downward. Hold for 10 seconds then relax.

3. Repeat exercise number 2 with a pillow under your heel.
4. When sitting place the operated leg on a chair/stool that is a similar height. Relax your leg and let the knee straighten.

5. Lie on your stomach. Keep both hips in contact with the bed and bend your operated knee, lifting your foot towards your buttocks. Hold for 10 seconds then relax.

6. Lie on your stomach. With the operated leg, press through the toes and tighten your thigh muscle to straighten the knee. Hold for 10 seconds.
7. Lie on your stomach, relax the operated leg over the edge of the bed and allow gravity to straighten it. Maintain the stretch without lifting your hips off bed and relax.

8. Lie on your back with your knees bent. Gently curl your lower back off the bed/floor until you are resting on your shoulder blades. Hold for 10 seconds and slowly relax.

9. Stand with your feet hip width apart, holding onto a steady surface. Slowly bend your knees to 45 degrees as if sitting down. Ensure feet remain flat and keep knee cap in line with second toe. Hold for 10 seconds and slowly return to start position.
10. Stand with your feet hip width apart, holding onto a steady surface. Raise heels of both feet without bending the knees. Hold for 10 seconds and then relax.

Contact details
If you have any questions regarding your operation or treatment, please do not hesitate to call us.

Consultant Secretaries
Mr Ashraf 0121 371 4946
Mr Baloch 0121 371 4946
Mr Massoud 0121 371 4963
Mr Parker 0121 371 4955
Mr Sargeant 0121 371 4955
Physiotherapy 0121 371 3428

The Trust provides free monthly health talks on a variety of medical conditions and treatments. For more information visit www.uhb.nhs.uk/health-talks.htm or call 0121 371 4957.