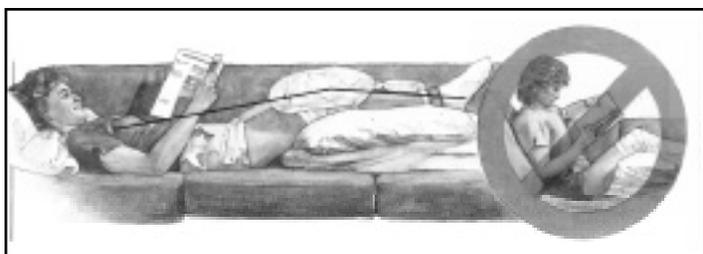


# After Arthroscopy

## Regaining Your Full Knee Potential

### Your Home Recovery

How quickly and fully you recover after arthroscopy is, to a large degree, up to you. Even if you have only a few tiny incisions, your knee needs special care at home. Elevation and ice can help control swelling or discomfort, and circulation exercises help prevent post-op complications. These simple precautions can help keep you comfortable, as well as allow you to start your home recovery exercises as soon as possible.



**Elevation.** Correct elevation reduces swelling, which in turn relieves pain and speeds healing. Elevation also helps prevent pooling of blood in your leg. To elevate your knee correctly, be sure to keep your knee and ankle above the level of your heart. The best position is lying down, with two pillows lengthwise under your entire leg. Elevate your knee whenever you're not on your feet for the first few days after arthroscopy.



**Circulation Exercises.** These prevent post-operative complications such as blood clotting in your leg. Point and flex your foot, and wiggle your toes, every few minutes you're awake for a week or two after arthroscopy.



**Meals.** Your first few meals after arthroscopy should include light, easily digestible foods and plenty of liquids. Some people may experience slight nausea, a temporary reaction to anesthesia.



**Dressings.** Your dressing keeps your knee clean and helps prevent infection. Your incisions may be closed with stitches or surgical tape and covered with gauze and an ace bandage. Be sure to leave your bandage on until your surgeon asks you to remove it (often a matter of days). Use just enough tension to get the wrinkles out if you re-wrap your ace (pulling tight cuts off circulation).

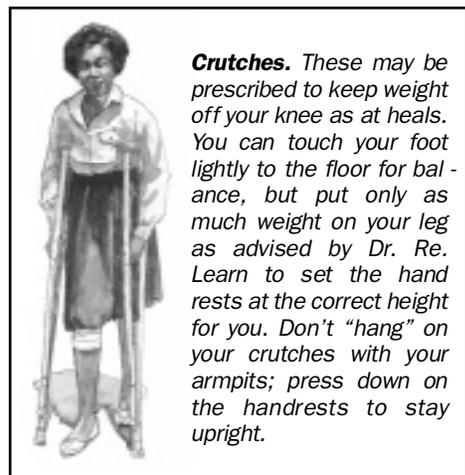
**Pain Medication.** Pain relievers allow you to rest comfortably and start your recovery exercises with a minimum of discomfort. Nighttime dosages are recommended, even if you're not in severe pain, which will assure a good night's rest. Pain often signals overactivity, so you might try rest and elevation to help relieve discomfort. Avoid alcohol if you're ingesting pain medication.



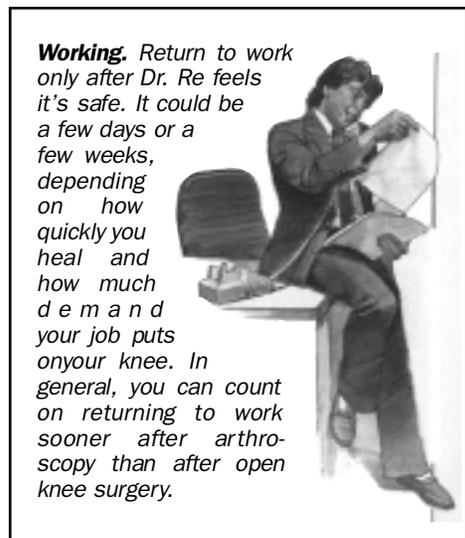
**Showers.** Hygienic showering is fine if Dr. Re agrees and you cover your leg with a plastic garbage bag tied above your dressing. Wait to take your first shower until you can stand comfortably for 10 to 15 minutes.



**Ice.** A natural anesthetic, ice helps relieve pain. Ice also controls swelling by slowing the circulation in your knee. To ice your knee, fill a small, plastic garbage bag with ice (crushed is best). Then wrap the ice bag with a small towel to protect your skin. Completely cover your knee and leave the ice on for 30 to 60 minutes, several times a day, for the first two to three days after arthroscopy. Avoid hot tubs, bathtubs, jacuzzis, or heating pads unless advised by Dr. Re.



**Crutches.** These may be prescribed to keep weight off your knee as it heals. You can touch your foot lightly to the floor for balance, but put only as much weight on your leg as advised by Dr. Re. Learn to set the hand rests at the correct height for you. Don't "hang" on your crutches with your armpits; press down on the handrests to stay upright.

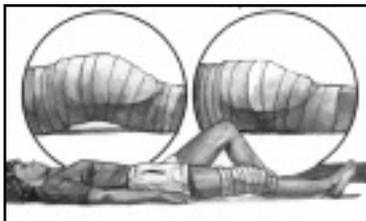


**Working.** Return to work only after Dr. Re feels it's safe. It could be a few days or a few weeks, depending on how quickly you heal and how much demand your job puts on your knee. In general, you can count on returning to work sooner after arthroscopy than after open knee surgery.

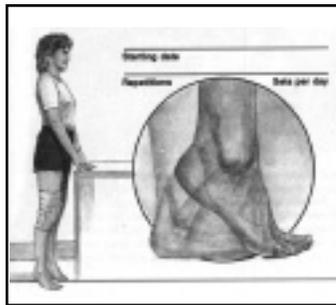
## Home Recovery Exercises

Rebuilding the muscles that support your knee – your quadriceps, hamstrings, and calf muscles – is one of the best ways to help your knee recover fully. The sooner you start these exercises, the better. Your goal is to avoid both overuse of these muscles (this causes inflammation, pain, and swelling) and underuse (this causes stiffness and atrophy). Dr. Re may advise you how often to do each exercise, or may simply recommend that you do each exercise several times per day, using your own fatigue or discomfort as a guide to stop. You'll get the most benefit from these exercises if you do them with slow, steady movements, and on both legs to maintain your muscle balance.

### Strengthening



**Quadriceps.** These sets help rebuild your front thigh muscles, which give your knee its greatest stability. "Quad sets" can be done anywhere, anytime, lying down or sitting. Simply tighten your quadriceps to press your knee toward the floor or bed. Hold for five to ten seconds, then relax. It may help to rest your hand on your kneecap and feel it move upward slightly as you tighten your muscles..



**Toe Presses:** These help rebuild your calf muscles. Simply press up on your toes with both feet, hold for 5 to 10 seconds, and slowly lower your heels. Use a support for balance.



**Front:** Lie on your back and do a "quad set." Lift your leg 8" to 12". Hold 4 to 6 seconds then slowly lower and repeat.



**Back:** Lie on your stomach and lift your leg straight behind you 8" - 12". Hold 4 to 6 seconds, then slowly lower and repeat.



**Inside:** Rest your leg on a low support as shown. Lift your bandaged leg up to touch ankles. Hold 4 to 6 seconds, lower, and repeat.



**Outside:** Lie on your side, and lift your bandaged leg 12" to 24". Hold 4 to 6 seconds, then slowly lower and repeat.

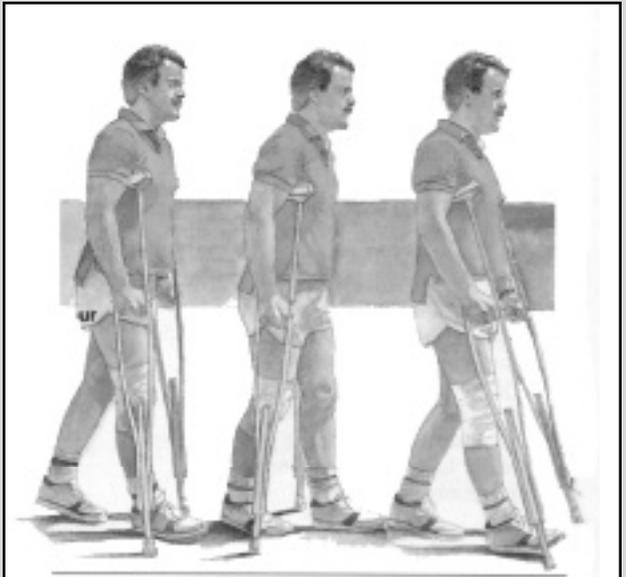
### Range of Motion



**Ankle Circles:** These movements help you regain range of motion in your ankle. Simply circle foot slowly, five times in each direction, making each circle as large as you can.



**Heel Slides.** Heel slides help you regain range of motion in your knee and hip. Start by lying down or sitting on a firm surface (a bed, floor, or firm couch). Bend your bandaged knee and slowly slide your heel up the bed or floor, as far as possible, toward your buttocks. Hold 4 to 6 seconds, then slowly slide your heel back down and repeat.



**Walking:** This helps you regain range of motion in your ankle, knee, and hip. Even if you're on crutches and not yet bearing full weight on your leg, you can start walking to improve circulation and speed the healing process in your leg. Try to keep your ankle, knee, and hip bending as normally as possible. Gradually put more weight on your leg and walk a little farther, as advised by Dr. Re.