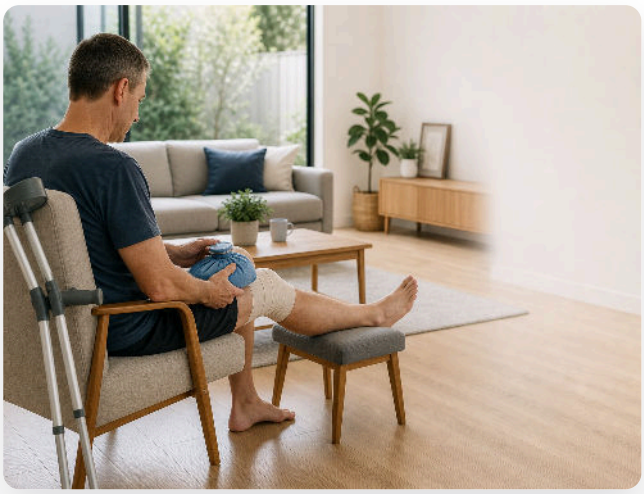
After knee arthroscopy

Home instructions for swelling control, wound care, walking and safe early recovery.



Knee arthroscopy is usually day surgery, but the knee still needs time to settle. The first two weeks are about protecting the small wounds, controlling swelling, keeping the knee moving gently and building walking confidence.

Your key instructions

1 Ice and elevate

Use ice for about 20 minutes at a time, several times each day, especially after exercises or walking. Keep a towel between ice and skin.

2 Keep dressings clean

Keep the bulky outer dressing clean and dry. Remove it after 24 hours, but leave the underlying waterproof dressing intact.

3 Walk little and often

Use crutches as instructed. For routine arthroscopy, weight bearing is often as comfortable; some procedures require stricter limits.

4 Take medication safely

Take pain relief, anti-inflammatory medication or blood-thinning medication only as prescribed. Avoid alcohol with sedating pain medicines.

5 Shower with care

After the bulky dressing has been removed, you may shower with the waterproof dressing left in place. Avoid baths, pools and spas until wounds are healed.

6 Do gentle movement

Start the simple exercises you were given. Aim for comfort and control rather than forcing the knee through pain.

If your procedure was more than a simple arthroscopy

Meniscal repair, microfracture, cartilage treatment, ligament reconstruction or other additional procedures may change your walking, brace, exercise and return-to-sport instructions. Follow the specific instructions from Dr Yas and the hospital team.

What to expect

Day 0-1

Rest, elevate, ice regularly, walk short distances with crutches and have an adult stay with you if advised after anaesthetic.

Day 2

The bulky dressing should already be off. Keep the underlying waterproof dressing intact unless you have been told otherwise.

Days 3-7

Increase gentle walking, keep swelling controlled and begin or continue physiotherapy as arranged.

Week 2

Many patients are walking more comfortably. Keep avoiding impact, twisting and kneeling until cleared.

Wound care

- [ ] Wash hands before touching dressings.
- [ ] Change wet or dirty dressings promptly.
- [ ] Do not apply creams, ointments or powders to the wounds unless advised.
- [ ] Do not soak the knee in a bath, pool or spa until wounds are healed.

Swelling and comfort

- [ ] Ice for short sessions rather than leaving ice on continuously.
- [ ] Elevate the leg with the knee supported comfortably.
- [ ] Avoid heat packs over the knee in the early recovery period.

Driving, work and activity

- [ ] Do not drive while taking sedating pain medication.
- [ ] For right knee surgery, wait until you can brake safely and have been cleared.
- [ ] Avoid running, jumping, pivoting and heavy lifting until reviewed.

Walking and stairs

- [ ] Use crutches until walking is comfortable, steady and safe.
- [ ] Keep walking distances short at first; increase gradually.
- [ ] Use a handrail on stairs and go slowly.
- [ ] If you were given weight-bearing restrictions, follow them strictly.

Simple early exercises

Ankle pumps

Move the ankle up and down often while resting.

Quad sets

Tighten the thigh muscle, hold briefly, then relax.

Heel slides

Gently bend and straighten the knee within comfort.

Straight leg raises

Only if comfortable and you can keep the knee controlled.

Follow-up

- [ ] Attend your post-operative appointment as arranged.
- [ ] Bring questions about wounds, exercises, driving, work or sport.

When to seek help

Call 000 for chest pain, severe shortness of breath, fainting or sudden collapse.

Contact the hospital, your GP or Ortho Precision promptly for fever, increasing redness or discharge from the wounds, uncontrolled pain, worsening calf pain or swelling, or if you feel something is not right.

This brochure provides general information only. Your individual instructions from Dr Yas, your anaesthetist, the hospital nurse or your physiotherapist should always take priority.