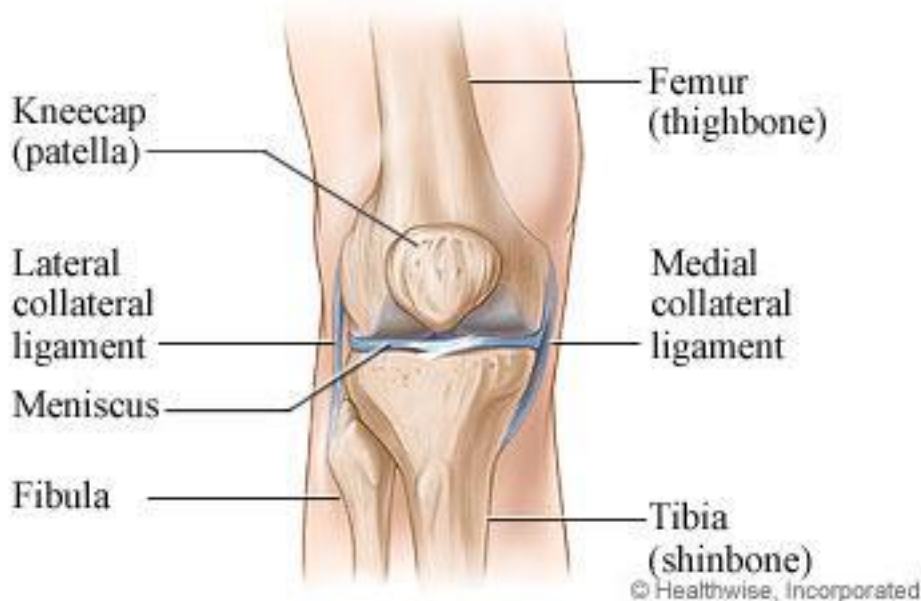


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Knee Arthroscopy: What to Expect at Home

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Your Recovery

Arthroscopy is a way to find problems and do surgery inside a joint without making a large cut (incision). Your doctor put a lighted tube with a tiny camera—called an arthroscope, or scope—and surgical tools through small incisions in your knee.

You will feel tired for several days. Your knee will be swollen. And you may notice that your skin is a different color near the cuts (incisions). The swelling is normal and will start to go away in a few days. Keeping your leg higher than your heart will help with swelling and pain.

You will probably need about 6 weeks to recover. If your doctor repaired damaged tissue, recovery will take longer. You may have to limit your activity until your knee strength and movement are back to normal. You may also be in a physical rehabilitation (rehab) program.

You may be able to return to a desk job or your normal routine in a few days. But if you do physical labor, it may be a few weeks to a few months before you can go back to work.

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This care sheet gives you a general idea about how long it will take for you to recover. But each person recovers at a different pace. Follow the steps below to get better as quickly as possible.

How can you care for yourself at home?

Activity

- Rest when you feel tired. Getting enough sleep will help you recover. Use pillows to raise your ankle and leg above the level of your heart.
- Try to walk each day, after your doctor has said you can. Start by walking a little more than you did the day before. Bit by bit, increase the amount you walk. Walking boosts blood flow and helps prevent pneumonia and constipation.
- You may have a brace or crutches or both.
- Your doctor will tell you how often and how much you can move your leg and knee.
- If you have a desk job, you may be able to return to work a few days after the surgery. If you lift things or stand or walk a lot at work, it may take a few weeks to a few months before you can return.
- You can take a shower 48 to 72 hours after surgery and clean the incisions with regular soap and water. Do not take a bath or soak your knee until your doctor says it is okay.
- Ask your doctor when you can drive again.
- If you had a repair of torn tissue, follow your doctor's instructions for lifting things or moving your knee.

Diet

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- You can eat your normal diet. If your stomach is upset, try bland, low-fat foods like plain rice, broiled chicken, toast, and yogurt.
- Drink plenty of fluids, unless your doctor tells you not to.
- You may notice that your bowel movements are not regular right after your surgery. This is common. Try to avoid constipation and straining with bowel movements. You may want to take a fiber supplement every day. If you have not had a bowel movement after a couple of days, ask your doctor about taking a mild laxative.

Medicines

- Your doctor will tell you if and when you can restart your medicines. You will also get instructions about taking any new medicines.
- If you stopped taking aspirin or some other blood thinner, your doctor will tell you when to start taking it again.
- Be safe with medicines. Take pain medicines exactly as directed.
 - If the doctor gave you a prescription medicine for pain, take it as prescribed.
 - If you are not taking a prescription pain medicine, ask your doctor if you can take an over-the-counter medicine.
- If you think your pain medicine is making you sick to your stomach:
 - Take your medicine after meals (unless your doctor has told you not to).
 - Ask your doctor for a different pain medicine.
- If your doctor prescribed antibiotics, take them as directed. Do not stop taking them just because you feel better. You need to take the full course of antibiotics.

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Incision care

- If you have a dressing over your cuts (incisions), keep it clean and dry. You may remove it 48 to 72 hours after the surgery.
- If your incisions are open to the air, keep the area clean and dry.
- If you have strips of tape on the incisions, leave the tape on for a week or until it falls off.

Exercise

- Move your toes and ankle as much as your bandages will allow.
- Bend and straighten your knee slowly several times during the day.
- Depending on why you had the surgery, you may have to do ankle and leg exercises. Your doctor or physical therapist will give you exercises as part of a rehabilitation program.
- Stop any activity that causes sharp pain. Talk to your doctor or physical therapist about what sports or other exercise you can do.

Ice

- To reduce swelling and pain, put ice or a cold pack on your knee for 10 to 20 minutes at a time. Do this every 1 to 2 hours. Put a thin cloth between the ice and your skin. If your doctor recommended cold therapy using a portable machine, follow the directions that came with the machine.

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Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

When should you call for help?

Call **911** anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You passed out (lost consciousness).
- You have severe trouble breathing.
- You have sudden chest pain and shortness of breath, or you cough up blood.

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- Your foot or toes are numb or tingling.
- Your foot is cool or pale, or it changes color.
- You have signs of a blood clot, such as:
 - Pain in your calf, back of the knee, thigh, or groin.
 - Redness and swelling in your leg or groin.
- You are sick to your stomach or cannot keep fluids down.
- You have pain that does not get better after you take pain medicine.
- You have loose stitches, or your incision comes open.
- Bright red blood has soaked through the bandage over your incision.
- You have signs of infection, such as:
 - Increased pain, swelling, warmth, or redness.
 - Red streaks leading from the incisions.
 - Pus draining from the incisions.
 - A fever.

Watch closely for any changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You do not have a bowel movement after taking a laxative.