

Post-Operative Concerns

Is it an EMERGENCY? If you or someone with you has chest pain, trouble breathing, or severe bleeding, it could be life threatening. Call 911 now.

If you have any concerns **during regular business hours**, please call our office in Banff (403-760-2897) and **not** the hospital. If you get a voice mail response, leave your name, best contact number and a detailed message. Please be patient. Our office staff will call you back within 24 hours (usually the same day). If you call the hospital, you will speak to a nurse who is **not** authorized to give you advice over the phone.

After hours, evenings or weekends, URGENT concerns can be directed to the hospital. (403-762-2222) The nurse will pass the message to the Surgeon who will respond within a reasonable time period. Otherwise please call during regular business hours.

1. **Uncontrolled pain** – if the prescribed painkiller (Tylenol #3, Tramacet or Percocet) is not controlling your pain, you may also take ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin) up to 600 mg every 6 hours in addition to the prescribed medication. Try not to take ibuprofen on an empty stomach. If you already have been prescribed Naproxen (Naprosyn) do not take ibuprofen in addition to this. Other actions such as loosening the tensor bandage, elevation of the extremity and icing can also help.
2. **Calf pain and swelling** after knee surgery is not uncommon. Call the office or hospital only if there is associated foot and ankle swelling.
3. **Swelling and redness of the shin** after ACL or other knee ligament surgery is not uncommon. Call the hospital only if the redness extends into the surgical incision sites or if there is persistent drainage of fluid (yellowish or cloudy fluid) after removing your bandage at the recommended time.
4. **Red skin above or below the bandage**. The most likely cause of this is the surgical prep solution which has a red dye in it. If you are concerned that this may be an infection, try washing that area with soap and water to see if it comes off. Believe it or not, patients have gone to their local doctor or hospital and have been misdiagnosed with wound infection because of this.
5. **Fever** fevers occurring within the first 2 days post-operatively are usually caused by a lack of full lung expansion and can be alleviated by Tylenol and deep breathing exercises. Call the office or hospital only if the fever persists beyond 48 hours and is associated with a feeling of general un-wellness.

6. **Bleeding a small amount** through the bandage can occur within the first 48 hours after surgery. Call the office or hospital **if** the bandage becomes saturated with blood, or bleeding persists after removing the bandage at the recommended time.
7. **Swelling of the hand** is common after shoulder and elbow surgery. This swelling can be prevented or alleviated by frequent flexion and extension of the fingers (or squeezing a rubber or foam ball) and by taking your arm out of the sling and fully extending your elbow (as when doing a pendulum exercise).
8. **Nausea and vomiting post operatively**, try stopping your prescribed painkiller if you can tolerate the pain, or take Gravol (can be purchased over the counter in pill and suppository form). Sometimes taking the painkiller with food will help. Call the office or hospital if experiencing uncontrolled vomiting.
9. **Itchy, red, blotchy rash** can occasionally occur with the use of a cold therapy unit. This is not an infection and occurs when the unit is used continuously for prolonged periods of time, even when a cloth is used between the cuff and the skin. If this should occur, stop using the cryocuff for a few days and then when resuming its use, applying it intermittently (20 minutes on and 20 minutes off).
10. **Pulled hamstring muscle**. After ACL surgery where your hamstring tendons were used for the surgery, it is not uncommon to pull that hamstring muscle within the first 6 weeks post-operatively. This may occur while pulling on your socks or shoes or bending over to pick something up. You may feel a sudden painful “pop” in the back of your knee or lower thigh. This does **not** mean that you have torn your ACL graft and the pain will settle down within a few days. However, if the pain persists beyond that or is associated with a significant increase in knee swelling; **please call our office and not the hospital**, as this concern can wait until regular office hours.
11. **Your Bandage**. When you remove your bandage for the first time, you may notice a clear string that looks like fishing line sticking out of the skin near the incision(s). This is a biodegradable suture that is used to close the skin incision. It will eventually fall off. However, you may snip these off at the level of the skin as early as 2 weeks post-operatively, or you can wait to have this done by your surgeon at your first follow-up appointment. After removing your bandage, avoid the temptation to touch your healing incisions as your own hands are the most common source of bacteria which cause wound infections.
12. **White strips of tape**: these are “Steri-strips” which are used to reinforce the stitching of the skin incisions. You may peel these off yourself after 2 weeks post-operatively when the incision should be healed.