

Knee Replacement Recovery

Physical Therapy and Activity Guide

With Dr. Trevor Stefanski’s **modern advances and techniques**, including **minimally invasive, muscle-sparing, ligament-sparing, and atraumatic approaches**, the vast majority of patients can achieve an **optimal outcome without the need for formal physical therapy**. These techniques are designed to **minimize tissue damage, reduce pain, and promote faster recovery**.

Your **progress will be evaluated** at each post-operative visit to ensure you are on track. If at any point **additional physical therapy is needed**, we will tailor the plan to meet your specific needs and help you achieve your recovery goals.

Below is a **home exercise and activity guide** to keep you on track:

Weeks 1–2: Early Home Recovery

Goals:

- Reduce **swelling**
- Manage **pain**
- Restore **initial mobility**

1. Compression and Elevation

- Use a **compression bandage or Velcro wrap** from your **foot to mid-thigh**.
- **Elevate your leg for 40 minutes every hour (toes above the nose)**.

2. Icing

- Apply **ice** to your surgical leg for **40 minutes every hour** to reduce swelling.

3. Physical Therapy

Perform these exercises **every hour while awake**:

- **Seated knee flexion/heel slides**: 10 repetitions
- **Knee extension (passive/assisted)**: 10 repetitions
- **Ankle pumps**: 10 repetitions
- **Walk 5–10 steps per hour**
- **Heel hangs**: 10 minutes, 3 times per day
- **Limit stair climbing** as much as possible
- **Focus on range of motion (ROM) exercises** with a goal of **0–110° by Day 14**

4. Step Count Goals

- **Week 1: 750 steps/day maximum**
- **Week 2: 1,200 steps/day maximum**

5. Other Tips

- **Avoid strengthening exercises** (e.g., squats or lunges) **until cleared by your surgeon**.
- If **swelling or ROM doesn't improve**, consider additional interventions like **lymphatic massage or a compression device**.

Weeks 3–6: Progressing Recovery

Goals:

- Build **strength**

Phone: 513-232-2663

Fax: 513-985-2580

- Increase **mobility**
- Reduce **swelling**

1. Compression and Elevation

- Continue using a **compression bandage or device**.
- Elevate your leg for **40 minutes**, at least **3 times per day**.

2. Icing

- Ice your leg for **40 minutes, 3 times per day** or more if needed.

3. Physical Therapy

- **Gradually stop using assistive devices** (e.g., crutches or walker) as tolerated.
- Perform **range of motion exercises 6 times per day for 5–8 minutes each session**.
- Continue **isometric quadriceps sets** (tightening your thigh muscle), but **avoid strengthening exercises like squats until after 6 weeks**.
- **Focus on achieving maximum ROM** (ideally matching your **intraoperative ROM**) by the end of **Week 4**.

4. Step Count Goals

- **Week 3: 2,000 steps/day maximum**
- **Week 4: 2,750 steps/day maximum**
- **Week 5: 3,500 steps/day maximum**
- **Week 6: 4,500 steps/day maximum**
- **Gradually increase by 1,000 steps/day each week**, using **pain and swelling as your guide**.

5. Returning to Work

- **Avoid returning to work before 6 weeks if possible**.

“Dr. Trevor” Stefanski, M.D.
Minimally Invasive Joint Specialist
DrTrevor.com/PT

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- **Standing, stairs, or lifting too early** may increase **swelling** and slow **recovery**.

Additional Tips for Recovery

- **Maintain an anti-inflammatory diet** and continue any **recommended supplements**.
- **Monitor for signs of excessive swelling** or **limited ROM**. Contact your surgeon if these occur.
- **Follow the prescribed plan** to ensure the **best possible recovery and long-term success**.

How to Use This Guide

- **Follow the step count goals and exercise routine daily**
- **Use pain and swelling as your guide for progression**
- **Reach out to your surgeon if you experience concerns**

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