

# Tips for total knee replacement recovery six weeks after surgery

The acute phase of recovery typically is wrapping up around six weeks after your total joint knee replacement. You should see the benefits of your new joint, and be happy that you made the life-changing decision to get a new knee. However, your knee is not done recovering. You are probably 80 to 85% recovered at six weeks. You will continue to improve up to six months after surgery. In 5 to 10% of patients, it takes a full year to recover.

## Frequently asked questions at six weeks:

### **Why is my knee numb, and will this go away?**

Numbness on the outside (lateral) part of your knee incision is normal. The nerves travel from inside to outside (medial to lateral) on the surface of your knee. These are cut with the incision of your knee, so that is why your knee is numb! The degree of numbness typically decreases over the first year after surgery. Most patients have a small numb patch just outside the incision that remains forever.

### **Why does my knee click and make sounds? Is that normal?**

It is normal for your knee to click and make sounds. This is the mechanical nature of the knee replacement and the metal and plastic parts coming into contact. If we put your knee in too tight, it will not click, but you won't be able to bend your knee. If we put it in too loose, the knee clicks a lot and the knee will be unstable. A "normal" knee replacement clicks at certain times. This does tend to decrease over time, and patients become used to it.

### **Why is my knee still warm and swollen? When will this go away?**

At six weeks out from surgery, it is normal for your knee to remain warm and swollen. This should look much better than it did two or three weeks after surgery, but still not "normal." The warmth and swelling are signs of inflammation, not infection, and are present in every total knee at six weeks. It will take around five months for all of the warmth and swelling to go away in the knee. Continuing to ice your knee will help with the warmth and swelling.

### **When can I return to higher level activities?**

This is something you can start working on now. At six weeks out from surgery, you have done most of the hard work necessary to regain range of motion in your knee and to get off to a good start on your recovery. Most patients are finishing their formal physical therapy and are ready to resume a home exercise program. This is an ideal time to dedicate yourself to an additional two months of strengthening activities for your knee. Your physical therapist will provide you will specific exercises to focus on moving forward. At six weeks, you can also resume recreational activities like hiking, golf, cycling, pickleball, tennis, etc. Realize that you just had knee replacement surgery six weeks ago and that it will take time to get back to these higher level activities. Building up strength in your knee and leg will improve your ability to do the activities that you enjoy. Remember full recovery following knee replacement is a six-month to one-year process.

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## **Can I kneel on my knee?**

Yes! You will not be doing any damage to your knee replacement by kneeling on your knee. However, many patients find it difficult to kneel on the knee because it is painful or just doesn't feel right. You can "train" your knee so that you can kneel on it. This involves a specific set of exercises and desensitization over time. You can start by kneeling on a couch for 10 minutes per day for one week. Then progress to kneeling on the couch cushion on the floor for 10 minutes per day for one week. Then change to a thinner pillow or gardening pad on the floor for 10 minutes per day for one week. Next progress to a thin carpet or thin rug for 10 minutes per day for one week. The last step is to then kneel on the floor.

## **Where can I find trusted information regarding living with a knee replacement online?**

The best resource is [hipknee.aahks.org](http://hipknee.aahks.org). This website is from the American Association of Hip and Knee Surgeons and has reliable peer-reviewed information that you can reference at your convenience.

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