

ST VINCENT'S PRIVATE HOSPITAL  
GRIFFITH



Allied Health Services  
Physiotherapy

# Your Knee Replacement Journey



ST VINCENT'S  
PRIVATE COMMUNITY  
HOSPITAL  
GRIFFITH

Patient Information

St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith is recognised as a leading private hospital providing comprehensive orthopaedic care. Each patient's individual journey is the cornerstone to our approach to holistic clinical care.

### **Our Values**

Compassion  
Justice  
Integrity  
Excellence

### **Our Quality Care and Safety Statement**

For those entrusted to our care we provide care that is underpinned by our:

- Respect for the Mission, Vision and Values of St Vincent's Health Australia;
- Partnership with consumers to deliver the safest care;
- Leaders who establish and sustain a culture of safety;
- Dedication to safety across the entire care continuum;
- Good communication;
- A systems approach and a commitment to continuous improvement;  
and
- A workforce that is appropriately skilled, qualified and supported.

This booklet has been prepared by the multidisciplinary orthopaedic care team at St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith for patients who are admitted for knee replacement surgery. The information contained within this booklet is to be used as a guide only. Each patient's individual journey may require a modification of the standard assessment and treatment procedures. It is important to carefully follow the specific instructions that are given to you by your surgeon, who will lead the delivery of your care at St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith.



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Operated by St Vincent's Private Allied Health Services, Sydney

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# Welcome to St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith

We thank you for choosing St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith to undergo your knee replacement surgery. We understand that undergoing knee replacement surgery is a major milestone in a person's life. This booklet has been designed to provide you with important information that will help you to achieve the best outcome following your knee replacement surgery.

The stages in your knee replacement surgery journey are outlined and discussed from the time that you decide to proceed with surgery through until your discharge and the options available for ongoing care.

## **This booklet will explain to you:**

- 1. How to prepare for knee replacement surgery;**
- 2. What to expect during and after your operation;**
- 3. How to prepare for your discharge home from the hospital; and**
- 4. Ongoing care arrangements for your recovery plan.**

Our clinical pathway for knee replacement surgery has been designed in conjunction with your surgeon to assist with your recovery so that you can safely be discharged home and return to your normal activities sooner. The success of this pathway depends on your active participation and working closely with all members of the orthopaedic health care team at St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith. Patients who are active participants in their care and recovery can experience better outcomes including higher rates of satisfaction and a faster recovery with an earlier return to activity.

*All of the information in this guide is available to you to help you to prepare both physically and emotionally for your knee replacement surgery. The information contained within this booklet is to be used as a guide only. Each patient's individual journey may require a modification of the approach used for standard assessment and treatment. It is important to carefully follow the specific instructions that are given to you by your surgeon, who will lead the delivery of your care at St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith.*

## **St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith Orthopaedic Care Team**

St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith has a highly skilled clinical team that is dedicated to providing comprehensive orthopaedic care for patients who undergo knee replacement surgery. The members of the orthopaedic care team work closely with your surgeon and include specialised orthopaedic nurses and physiotherapists. Care will be provided to prepare you for your knee replacement surgery and to enable you to recover optimally after surgery to ensure a smooth and safe transition home. Members of our physiotherapy team will communicate with your GP and other treating physiotherapists who will be managing your care following your knee replacement surgery. Our physiotherapy team is also available to continue your care following discharge at St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith.

Please contact a member of our physiotherapy team at your earliest convenience to arrange a preoperative (Prehab) appointment. At this appointment we will go through with you:

- What you should expect from your knee replacement journey at St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith;
- Any questions or concerns that you might have about your knee replacement surgery;

- Accessing our prehabilitation physiotherapy program; and
- Your options for ongoing care following your discharge from the hospital.

Telehealth consultations are also available for patients who are unable to attend in person.

**Telephone: 0403 211 931**

**Monday–Friday 8am–4pm**

**Email: [griffithphysio@svphsahs.com.au](mailto:griffithphysio@svphsahs.com.au)**

## **Preadmission Clinic**

Your surgeon will refer you to the physiotherapy Prehab Clinic and also to our Preadmission Clinic after you have been scheduled for your knee replacement surgery at St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith. This appointment will be coordinated by a member of our Orthopaedic Care Team. At the Preadmission Clinic, you will be carefully assessed and provided with education and information regarding your hospital stay. It may be helpful to have a relative or friend join you for your in-person preadmission clinic appointment. As most knee replacement patients are admitted on the day of surgery, we encourage you to attend your preadmission appointment approximately two weeks before your surgery.

## **Telehealth**

Preadmission Clinic appointments are also conducted via telehealth for those patients who are travelling from outer rural areas or who are unable to attend an in-person assessment. These appointments can be made over the telephone.

The Preadmission Clinic is located on the ground floor at St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith and operates from Monday to Friday from 8am until 4pm.

In-person and telehealth preadmission appointments will involve you answering questions about your health and wellbeing. Additionally, our team will answer any questions that you have about your hospital admission and stay. At this appointment, you will have time to discuss your individual needs, including any dietary requirements and your current medications. You will need to advise the Preadmission Clinic nurse of your pre-existing medical conditions and any prior surgery. There will also be an opportunity to discuss any aspects of your care or any concerns that you have.

**It is important that you inform the Preadmission Clinic nurse of any anti-inflammatory medications or blood-thinning medications that you are taking, such as Cartia, Warfarin, Plavix, Cardiprin, Iscover, Voltaren, Celebrex, Mobic or Brufen. In most instances, these medications should be stopped according to the specific instructions that you receive from your surgeon and/or your anaesthetist.**

In-person Preadmission Clinic consultations will also involve an assessment by a specially trained nurse, who will:

- Measure your blood pressure, heart rate, height and weight;
- Organise any investigations that are requested by your surgeon if you have not completed these prior to your appointment; and
- Discuss with you the use of an antibacterial skin cleanser to shower with prior to your hospital admission.

Please allow for up to one hour for your in-person preadmission clinic appointment. This appointment may also include your physiotherapy prehabilitation consultation.

Prior to your Preadmission Clinic we ask that you complete the online admission and registration forms and your preoperative blood tests and X-ray. If you are unable to complete the online admission process, we will send you the paperwork via email or in the post to complete.

**What to bring to your preadmission appointment:**

- A list of your current medications from either your pharmacy or your General Practitioner;
- Details of your health insurance fund;
- Any entitlement cards, including your Medicare, Safety Net, Department of Veterans Affairs, Pensioner Health Card and/or Health Benefit Card; and
- Contact details for your General Practitioner and next of kin.

*If your surgeon has advised you to complete a review with a Cardiologist, Physician and/or Anaesthetist, please schedule this appointment at least five days prior to your Preadmission Clinic appointment.*

# Before Your Knee Replacement Surgery

Undergoing knee replacement surgery requires planning and an understanding of the most appropriate recovery plan. Planning your recovery and discharge home after knee replacement surgery begins the moment you decide to proceed with surgery.

Knee replacement surgery is a commonly performed operation that provides significant pain relief, increases function and improves quality of life. There have been numerous advancements in the design of joint replacement implants, surgical techniques and anaesthetic procedures that have improved the patient experience enormously. Most patients are able to be discharged safely home between three to five days after their knee replacement surgery at St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith. The home discharge plan includes the prescription of a personalised exercise program and ongoing reviews with a physiotherapist.

**There is a common belief that admission to a rehabilitation hospital facility is required after knee joint replacement surgery. The Orthopaedic Surgeons who operate at St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith utilise world-class anaesthetic procedures to minimise the effects of surgery and have defined clinical pathways to improve the recovery time considerably. This has meant that traditional inpatient hospital rehabilitation programs are no longer part of the usual care that patients receive following knee replacement surgery.**

Inpatient hospital rehabilitation programs are now only reserved for patients who require them. A range of clinical trials and observational studies have reported that there is **no additional benefit** for the majority of patients who attend inpatient rehabilitation programs

after knee joint replacement surgery. In fact, patients who are able to return home following knee replacement surgery can experience better outcomes. The rates of readmission to hospital and untoward events are higher among patients who are discharged to inpatient rehabilitation programs compared to those who are discharged home after uncomplicated knee replacement surgery.

The majority of knee replacement patients are able to enjoy the comforts of home after surgery. There are many advantages to going home that will ultimately speed up your recovery and your return to normal activities. By returning home you reduce your risk of acquiring an infection or having an adverse event such as a blood clot. Additionally, sleeping in your own bed and taking your time to complete your prescribed exercise programme can increase your levels of satisfaction.

*It is important to have a discussion with your surgeon about your recovery plan and your individual requirements.*

## **Prehabilitation at St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith**

Your recovery plan after knee replacement surgery begins when you are booked in for your surgery. Your recovery starts prior to surgery with a program that is known as **Prehabilitation**. Our experienced orthopaedic physiotherapy team will work closely with your surgeon to provide you with an individualised prehabilitation program.

Prehabilitation involves a one-on-one consultation with one of our orthopaedic physiotherapists at St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith. This consultation can be undertaken in-person or via a telephone or Zoom telehealth consultation. In-person appointments are completed in the Physiotherapy Department at St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith.

During your prehabilitation consultation the orthopaedic physiotherapist will outline the steps that will be involved in your recovery plan. You will be instructed to familiarise yourself with and practice a series of **comfortable exercises** that will be an important part of your postoperative recovery plan. In-person consultations will also include practicing the use of crutches. Any ongoing prehabilitation requirements can also be arranged during your prehabilitation consultation.

**You can contact the Physiotherapy Department to arrange your prehabilitation appointment by calling 0403 211 931.**

**A fee for service is charged for this appointment. All the necessary equipment can be purchased at these appointments.**

## Your Recovery Plan

### What Are Your Options?

Our Orthopaedic Care Team will assist you and your surgeon with implementing your recovery plan. Your health, wellbeing and lifestyle factors will help to determine the most suitable option for you.

Your recovery plan after knee replacement surgery involves the prescription of a series of progressive exercises that will help you to regain your mobility and independence. These exercises are routinely prescribed by physiotherapists and will commence immediately after surgery during your hospital stay.

Following discharge from the hospital, your ongoing rehabilitation can be undertaken independently or delivered by a physiotherapist at a local private physiotherapy practice or within our physiotherapy department at St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith. The type, structure and design of your rehabilitation program will be based on your individual needs in conjunction with discussions with your surgeon.

### Home Exercises with No Follow Up-Physiotherapy Requirements

Some patients may only be required to continue the exercises that are prescribed during their stay at St Vincent's Private Community

Hospital Griffith. This program can be undertaken along with a carefully graded walking program. This is a convenient recovery plan option for many patients; however, this is not a suitable option for everyone who undergoes knee replacement surgery. The suitability of this option will be determined by the members of the physiotherapy team in conjunction with you and your surgeon prior to your discharge.

### **Outpatient Recovery Plan at Your Local Private Physiotherapy Practice**

You may wish to see a private physiotherapist for individualised care following discharge from St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith. This recovery plan will often incur out-of-pocket expenses, with the cost dependent on your available health insurance 'extras' coverage and the consultation fee that is charged by your specific physiotherapy clinic. This is a great option for patients who have a good relationship with their local physiotherapist. It is important to remember that the physiotherapy care that you receive will be largely based on prescription of a progressive exercise recovery plan rather than passive 'hands-on' physiotherapy care. Individualised physiotherapy care is also available from the physiotherapy team at St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith.

### **Preparing Your Home Prior to Knee Replacement Surgery**

Organising your home environment before knee replacement surgery is an important part of your recovery plan to keep you safe, prevent falls and reduce stress. The following information is designed to help you set up your home, as well as information about equipment that is available to help you with your recovery and with your safe transition home from St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith.

#### **Footwear**

Ensure that you have a pair of supportive and comfortable shoes, with a flat grip sole that fully enclose your feet (they need to have a back). It is best that the footwear that you select has previously been worn and are easy to get on and off.

## **Pets**

Consider pets in your home. You may need assistance looking after them following your surgery, or make arrangements to keep pets in another area of the house when you first arrive home to avoid any interference with your walking.

## **Small Children**

Small children may need to be reminded how to interact with you in ways that keep you safe. Interacting with children while you are sitting down is a good strategy to consider.

## **Gardening**

Ensure you have stopped gardening two weeks prior to surgery to avoid any skin tears that will prevent your surgery from going ahead. After surgery you are advised not to return to gardening for up to six weeks.

## **Driving**

Patients are often concerned about their driving after knee replacement surgery. You will require clearance from your surgeon to drive. This may be up to six weeks following your surgery. You can easily travel as a passenger for short periods at a time. You will need to arrange for someone to drive you to and from hospital and any necessary appointments until you are allowed to drive. It is easier to transfer into a car that has a seat that can be adjusted. A cushion can help to raise the seat if you are travelling in a low car. Our Physiotherapists at St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith will ensure that you are safe getting in and out of a car before you are discharged home.

The approach used to safely get in and out of a car as a passenger is presented in the 'Car Transfers' section of this information guide in Appendix 2.

## **Trip Hazards**

Eliminate clutter in hallways and rooms. Move furniture to give you more space if required. Ensure that there is enough space throughout your home for you to move around while using a walking aid such as crutches or a walking stick. Create a clear, wide path from your bedroom to your bathroom and kitchen to help you move more easily around your home.

Make sure carpets/loose rugs are firmly anchored to the floor or remove them completely. All carpets and remaining mats should lie flat without wrinkles, curling or fraying.

Move electrical cords and cables so they are safely stored away from walkways.

Make sure that the pathways and entrances to your home are well lit at night and in good repair. Remove leaves and other objects on pathways to ensure safe access to your home.

Check to make sure that all stair railings are secure.

Make sure that all areas of your home are well-lit, including a light for accessing the bathroom at night.

## **Furniture & Seating**

Low furniture, soft surfaces, footstools, rocking chairs, chairs with wheels (e.g. office chairs) should be avoided. Couches are also best avoided in the early postoperative phase as they are difficult to get in and out of. Consider what chairs you have at home that are easy to get in and out of. Chairs with armrests that are not too low are very practical. A higher stable chair with arms is recommended. You can place an additional cushion on the seat of lower chairs to make them easier to get in and out of. Height adjustable orthopaedic chairs are also available if you do not have a suitable seating option. Please see the 'Equipment Options' section of this information guide.

## **Bathroom**

Measure the height of your toilet seat prior to admission so your physiotherapist at St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith can assess whether you require equipment to make your toilet seat higher for your safety. You may need an 'over-toilet aid' to assist you getting on and off the toilet after your operation.

Many patients are able to have a shower standing up after knee replacement surgery. A 'shower chair' or 'shower stool' can also be used if it is required. A member of our Physiotherapy team at St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith can advise you on suitable options if your shower is over your bath.

A non-slip rubber bath mat on the floor of the shower can be useful if the floor is slippery, and a non-slip mat on the outside of the shower will be useful so that you do not step with wet feet onto tiles.

## **Bedroom**

Use a nightlight or a bedside light that is easily accessible, especially when you are getting out of bed to go to the toilet at night. When you first wake up and need to get out of bed to use the bathroom, sit on the side of the bed for a few minutes to fully wake up and collect your thoughts. Ensure that your bed clothes do not hang too low to the floor as they can become a trip hazard. Keep all your clothing in higher drawers or in other easily accessible locations.

## **Stairs**

It is important to be able to safely climb up and down stairs following your knee replacement surgery and it is also a good exercise to strengthen your legs. You will be shown how to climb the stairs safely with the use of crutches by your physiotherapist during your in-person prehabilitation and throughout your hospital stay. A set of practice stairs located on the inpatient unit at St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith is easily accessible for teaching and practicing going up and down stairs in preparation for discharge home.

It may be helpful to avoid stairs during the night to get to the bathroom, or leave a light on. Perhaps think about a temporary bedroom set-up downstairs to avoid this in the initial few days following discharge home if you are concerned.

### **Laundry/Cleaning/Meals/Shopping**

Shop in advance to stock up on essential items including toiletries and nutritious non-perishable food. It can be helpful to pre-prepare and freeze a batch of lunch and dinner meals that you can enjoy during your recovery after knee replacement surgery. You may require assistance initially with supermarket shopping. When shopping for a small amount of items, it is a good idea to bring a backpack rather than carrying shopping bags.

At home, place the most frequently used items within safe reach. A safe height is between your shoulder and waist height. Low shelves and drawers such as those found in the refrigerator/shelves/washing machines should be avoided. Place frequently used objects in convenient places at waist height. This can include storing kitchen items for food preparation and cooking on countertops instead of low drawers. Consider placing food items in the refrigerator and pantry at a level that is easy to access.

You may wish to arrange for some help with cleaning, laundry and meals in the first few weeks after arriving home from hospital. It is recommended you avoid household cleaning for the first 4-6 weeks; this includes laundry, bed-making, vacuuming, mopping and sweeping.

### **Personal Grooming**

It is a good idea to prepare yourself by taking care of all your personal grooming needs prior to your knee replacement surgery, such as getting your hair cut and trimming your toe nails.

## **Clothing**

We advise that you wear loose fitting day wear when you are a patient at St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith. These items of clothing will help you to be comfortable and to move more easily when undertaking your recovery plan exercises.

## **Home Exercise Area**

Consider a space within your home where you will be able to complete your prehabilitation exercises and your postoperative home exercise program.

## **Equipment Options**

There are a wide range of equipment options available to assist you with a safe recovery after knee replacement surgery. When recovering after knee replacement surgery you will require the use of a walking aid such as crutches, a walking stick or a frame. We recommend pre-purchasing crutches prior to surgery and practicing using them. Walking aids are available when you attend your in-person prehabilitation session with a member of our physiotherapy team at St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith. You will need to practice walking with crutches daily in the lead up to surgery so you are well prepared to use these after your knee replacement surgery.

Equipment items may be prescribed by your physiotherapist, depending on your particular needs after surgery. Most of these equipment items can be purchased directly from the Physiotherapy Department prior to surgery or at the time of discharge (subject to availability). Alternatively these equipment items can be hired or purchased from a number of mobility stores and local pharmacies, or you may even have friends or relatives who already have access to these items. A member of our Physiotherapy team at St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith is available to assist you prior to your discharge home. The range of equipment items that are available is presented over.

## Equipment That May be Prescribed Following Total Knee Replacement Surgery

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### Long Shoe Horn

A long shoe horn can help you put on your shoes by yourself. It may be recommended if you have difficulty putting on your shoes.



### Long-Handled Reacher

A long-handled reacher can be helpful if you experience difficulties picking items up from the floor after surgery.



### Height Adjustable Shower Chair

After surgery, if you need to shower in a seated position, experience difficulties with dizziness or fatigue, a shower chair may be recommended to improve your safety showering at home. There are also different equipment options available for homes with baths.



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### **Raised Toilet Seat with Handles**

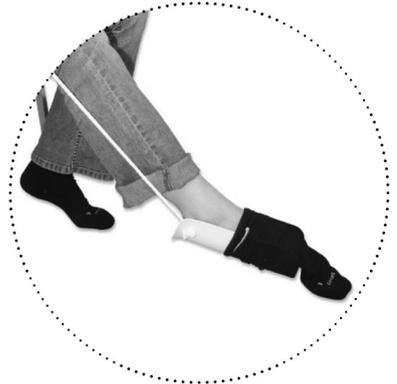
Getting on and off a low toilet can be difficult after knee replacement surgery, especially if you have a low toilet seat and need to use your hands to assist you to get into standing.



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### **Sock Aid**

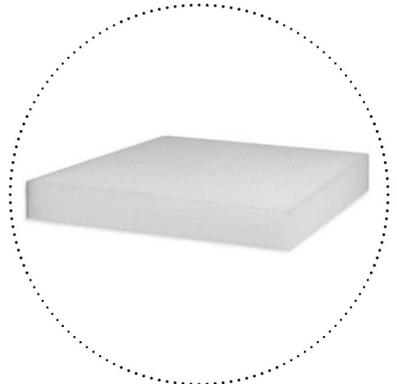
Sock aids are useful if you experience difficulties putting on socks.



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### **Foam cushion**

A foam cushion can be used to assist with increasing the height of car seats, chairs at home and chairs within the community to help you stand up more easily.



# Checklist Prior to Your Hospital Admission

- I have attended the prehabilitation clinic either in-person or via telehealth, and completed the prehabilitation exercises.
- I have had my preadmission appointment (I know when to stop any medication, have had all my necessary x-rays/ blood tests).
- I have discussed with my surgeon, family and the Orthopaedic Care Team at St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith about where I would like to attend physiotherapy appointments after I go home.
- I have a recovery plan following my discharge home, including a 'support person' who will be able to stay with you or visit and someone to pick you up from hospital.
- I understand that the St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith discharge time is 10.00am**
- I have organised crutches to practice with before surgery and use after surgery.
- I have organised the equipment I have been advised that I will need at home after surgery, such as an over-toilet aid, shower chair, orthopaedic chair and or wedge cushion. Please speak with the physiotherapist at St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith for your recommended equipment requirements following your knee replacement surgery.
- I have appropriate secure footwear to bring to hospital (flat, covered-heel shoes).
- I have comfortable clothes to wear in and around St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith (day clothes/loungewear).
- I have prepared my home for my return after hospital discharge.

# Your Hospital Stay

A member of our Orthopaedic Care Team will telephone you prior to your knee replacement surgery. During this telephone call, you will be advised of:

- Your time of admission
- When you should cease eating and drinking and
- Which of your regular medications you will need to take on the day of your surgery

You will need to present to the Admissions Centre which is located on the ground floor at St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith. Following admission, you will be prepared for your knee replacement surgery. This will include the following:

- Any hair around your knee will be clipped according to your surgeon's instructions.
- The skin on your leg will be checked for any cuts, abrasions or signs of infection.
- The details of your medical history, any allergies and your current medications will be checked and confirmed.
- You will change into a hospital gown and remove any nail polish and jewellery. You will likely be able to keep on your plain wedding ring (which will be taped to your finger during your surgery).
- Any dentures will be removed prior to surgery.
- Your temperature, heart rate, blood pressure and oxygen levels will be carefully checked by the nursing team.
- You will be asked about your last bowel movement in order to determine if a laxative is required prior to surgery.
- You will be measured for the support stockings that you will be required to wear after your surgery to reduce the risk of a DVT (clots) in your legs.
- Your anaesthetist will visit you to complete an assessment, finalise the type of anaesthetic that will be used during your surgery and go over your postoperative plan for pain management.

## Your Knee Replacement Surgery

You will be transported to the anaesthetic bay outside the operating theatre. Your identity and type of surgery will be checked. You will then be wheeled into the operating theatre for your surgery.

## Recovery

After your knee replacement surgery, you will be transferred to our recovery unit where our recovery team will carefully monitor your heart rate, blood pressure, oxygen levels, temperature and any pain that you might be experiencing.

When you wake up after your knee replacement surgery, you may notice:

- An oxygen mask or oxygen tubing in your nostrils to assist your breathing
- Drainage tubes from your knee to remove any fluid build-up
- A large dressing over your surgical wound
- An intravenous drip in your arm to administer pain medications, antibiotics and fluids (this will likely remain in place for several days)
- A urinary catheter
- Support stockings
- Calf compressors

You will remain in the recovery room until you have fully woken up and your heart rate, blood pressure, oxygen levels and temperature are all within a normal range. Your pain will be assessed to ensure that the pain management plan prescribed by your anaesthetist is working well. You will then be wheeled out of the recovery unit to the ward by an anaesthetic recovery nurse.

# Recovery Plan

## On The Ward

On the ward after your knee replacement surgery, the experienced Orthopaedic Care Team of nurses and physiotherapists at St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith will provide your care. All members of the Orthopaedic Care Team will monitor you closely and liaise with your surgeon and anaesthetist to ensure you remain comfortable and safe during your recovery. During your hospital admission you will likely require blood tests, x-rays and other scans depending on your surgeon's protocol. Your nurse will advise you when this will be required.

As an 'active participant' in your own care experience, the Orthopaedic Care Team will communicate with you and involve you in all aspects of your care. This includes clinical handover, pain management education, wound management advice and preparing for discharge home. Your physiotherapy treatment is designed to optimise your recovery after knee replacement surgery. Active involvement in the physiotherapy care that you receive is an essential part of your recovery to help you restore muscle strength, knee range of movement, walk normally again and complete personal care tasks, like showering yourself.

All physiotherapy and nursing care is based on 'functional goals' that we know are needed in order to safely get you home. You will see your 'GOALS' chart on the wall in your hospital room – these are the functional tasks we want you to be able to achieve independently, which indicate when you are safe to go home, and all staff will be working towards these with you every day during your stay.

It is also important that you discuss your longer-term goals with your physiotherapist throughout your recovery, as we are all working towards getting you back to your hobbies and everyday activities that are an important part of your life.

## Realistic Expectations

# Pain and Swelling

### **Postoperative Pain Management**

Patients often ask – ‘Is it going to hurt after my knee replacement surgery?’ The answer to this is yes. However, it is more important to fully understand the strategies that we use at St Vincent’s Private Community Hospital Griffith to carefully and effectively manage the expected pain symptoms. It is important that you feel comfortable discussing your pain levels and pain relief requirements with the members of the Orthopaedic Care Team. Effective pain management after total knee replacement surgery requires a plan to keep the expected pain within a very comfortable limit rather than trying to reduce increasing pain symptoms. This is often referred to as ‘keeping a lid on the pain’ or ‘staying ahead of the pain’ rather than ‘letting the pain get away from you’.

The amount of pain following total knee replacement surgery will vary from person to person. Patients are often surprised at how manageable the pain and discomfort is following knee replacement surgery at St Vincent’s Private Community Hospital Griffith. Pain management is an integral component of your care at St Vincent’s Private Community Hospital Griffith and this is achieved through the advanced skills of our experienced surgeons, in combination with the pain management expertise of our anaesthetists and orthopaedic nurses and physiotherapists. All members of your Orthopaedic Care Team will work closely with your surgeon to help manage your pain effectively, so you are able to move around comfortably and to effectively and successfully participate in your physiotherapy sessions and achieve the goals of your recovery plan and to get you safely home.

It is also important to realise that the pain experienced after your surgery is not originating from your new knee prosthesis, but from the surgical procedure itself, including the bruising and swelling in the recently operated soft tissue and bone. The expected postoperative pain symptoms progressively improve and resolve with time.

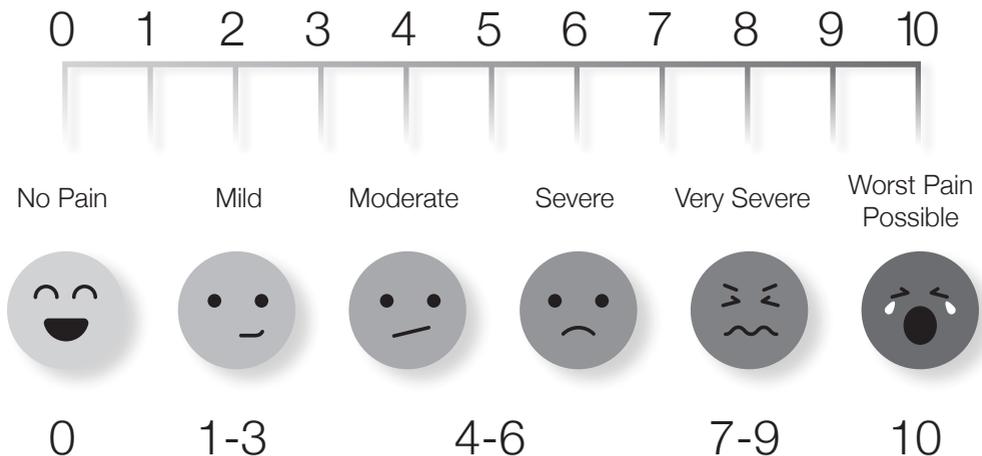
## Your Role in Pain Management

All members of the Orthopaedic Care Team will monitor and help you manage your expected postoperative pain from the moment you leave the operating suite through education and communication. The Orthopaedic Care Team will liaise with your surgical team throughout your admission to ensure good pain management is achieved every step of the way.

Communication between you and the members of your Orthopaedic Care Team is key. Since we are unable to see pain, you are the only one who will know the exact location and intensity of your pain. Providing accurate information that will be used to help manage your pain is essential.

The members of the Orthopaedic Care Team use a visual analogue scale from zero (no pain) to ten (the worst pain that you can imagine) to rate the intensity of your postoperative pain. A visual analogue scale is presented below (see Pain Assessment Scale). Your rating of any postoperative pain will assist your Orthopaedic Care Team to understand how your pain is and to deliver the best approach to reduce your pain.

**Figure: Pain Assessment Scale**



## Regular Pain Relief is Required

Remember you need to take your pain medication regularly and as soon as you begin to feel discomfort. Actively managing the pain using medications is not failure but a strategic way to facilitate an optimal recovery. ***Never wait until you have moderate or severe pain during any stage of your recovery plan.*** We recommend that you have your regular pain relief medication timed approximately 30 minutes prior to commencing your physiotherapy and independent exercise sessions or when going for a walk. This is an important strategy that will enable you to participate more effectively in your physiotherapy and independent exercise sessions, and allow you to move around comfortably, which is very important and will assist you with managing your recovery plan.

## Multimodal Pain Management

Multimodal pain management involves the use of a range of medications, techniques and strategies to control and manage the expected postoperative pain symptoms after knee replacement surgery. Using a combination of medications, strategies and techniques can substantially decrease the intensity of the pain experienced following your knee replacement surgery.

***An effective pain management plan allows you to move about earlier following your knee joint replacement, regain your independence and confidently return to being independent within a relatively short period of time. Coping with pain after surgery does not have to mean taking more pain medication. There are additional strategies that can help you deal with your surgery pain. Using a combination of these strategies can be very helpful and can provide better pain relief than medication alone.***

**Stay ahead of the pain:** Getting ahead of the pain means not waiting until your pain is increasing and severe before you take any pain medications. If you wait until your pain is severe it will be more difficult

to control your pain, especially after waiting for the medication to be absorbed by your body and to take effect.

In the days immediately following your surgery, try taking your pain medication as prescribed by your surgeon. As your pain improves, you can extend the time between doses until you are able to stop using it altogether. This usually includes careful discussions with your surgeon and/or your GP.

**Ice:** Regular use of ice after knee joint replacement surgery can assist to reduce swelling and pain. We recommend applying ice to the operated site for 20-30 minutes, 4-6 times a day. Ice packs are always available on the inpatient ward at St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith. The members of the nursing and physiotherapy team will encourage the use of ice regularly during your hospital stay. A range of icing systems are available following knee replacement surgery.

**Sleep Well:** Good sleep improves your ability to manage your pain and is an important part of your healing and recovery. You may require pain relieving medication, the use of ice packs and proper positioning such as a pillow placed between or under your knees) to aid this.

**Pace Yourself:** It is important to increase your physical activity slowly and steadily as you recover from your surgery so you are able to return to your normal activities.

**Don't Sit For Too Long:** Sitting or lying in one place for too long can lead to an increase in pain after knee replacement surgery. Getting up and walking for short distances each hour during the day helps keep you from getting stiff and sore and offers the added benefit of decreasing the risk of developing blood clots in your legs after your surgery.

**Manage Your Stress Levels:** Stress can be the enemy of effective pain control. An increase in stress can and often does increase the level of postoperative pain. Surgery is a type of physical stress, and while that cannot be avoided, emotional stress can be minimised. Try to avoid situations, and even people, who tend to increase your stress levels in the early days of your recovery plan. Stress reduction techniques, such as deep breathing and relaxation exercises, can be very beneficial.

Remember, the better prepared you are coming in for your surgery, the better you are likely to be able to cope with the postoperative period.

## **Managing Your Pain at Home**

Following your discharge home, your surgeon will prescribe you with discharge pain relief medications. These medications and their duration will be noted on your “Discharge Medication Summary”. As an ‘active participant’ in your recovery, it is beneficial while you are in hospital that you understand the medications you are being given, how they make you feel, and ensure that you are aware of which medications you have been prescribed to take home with you. As your pain improves your medications can be gradually reduced and ceased – your GP and/or surgeon will help guide you to reduce your pain medications when you are ready to do so.

## **Realistic Expectations**

### **Physiotherapy**

You will be assessed and treated by a physiotherapist on the ward after your knee replacement surgery. Physiotherapy treatment is very important after knee replacement surgery and is routinely ordered by your surgeon. Physiotherapy treatment can start as early as the same day as your surgery, depending on the time you come back from the operating theatre and the specific instructions that are received from your surgeon. The physiotherapist, will begin your recovery by completing a series of bed exercises and then carefully assist you to stand and take a few steps with the aid of a walking frame.

Do not attempt to get out of bed on your own. Your physiotherapist will let you know when it is safe for you to get up by yourself. Your physiotherapist will teach you exercises to do in your bed. These exercises are for you to do independently and comfortably, three to four times a day and are essential for your knee replacement recovery plan. Your physiotherapist and nurse will advise you when it is safe and appropriate for you to start sitting in a chair for all of your meals.

***A member of the physiotherapy team will see you daily at St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith to progress your recovery plan. This will include:***

- Prescription and progression of your individualised exercise program;
- Walking retraining and practice;
- Increasing your ability to get in and out of bed and to stand up independently;
- Completing a carefully graded walking program; and
- Practice walking up and down stairs.

**The role of the physiotherapy team is to prescribe a graded program that encourages you and helps you to achieve independence at each stage of your recovery plan.**

## **Respiratory Care**

Your lung function can be reduced with surgery due to the anaesthetic procedures and a reduction in your activity levels. These changes are managed by the physiotherapy team and can be reversed by completing regular 'lower chest wall' or 'basal breathing' exercises in conjunction with upright positioning such as sitting and standing. The early supervised mobility plan that is undertaken by our physiotherapy team at St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith is also important for restoring your lung function after knee replacement surgery.

## **Lower Chest Wall Basal Breathing Exercises**

Take a slow deep breath, making sure that you keep your shoulders relaxed. You should feel your lower chest wall move out to the side. Then gently exhale. Repeat ten times followed by normal breathing.

Take a slow, deep breath as you raise one hand directly above your head. Complete this for each arm ten times.

Your physiotherapist at St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith will instruct you on how to do these exercises during your prehabilitation appointment and after your surgery.

# Your Physiotherapy Recovery Plan

## Following Total Knee Replacement Surgery at St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith

<b>Prehabilitation Consultation</b>	<p>Assessment and introduction to the physiotherapy team at St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith.</p> <p>Education and familiarisation with the postoperative exercise and mobility.</p> <p>Review the recovery plan.</p> <p>Crutch walking education and practice including stairs.</p>
<b>Preoperative Period</b>	<p>Practice walking with crutches twice daily including the use of stairs.</p> <p>Complete the comfortable prehabilitation exercises as prescribed in the prehabilitation consultation.</p> <p>Prepare your home.</p> <p>Arrange necessary equipment for your discharge home.</p> <p>Review of the education materials.</p> <p>Call the physiotherapist at St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith to discuss any aspects of your recovery plan.</p>
<b>Admission</b>	<p>Admission on the ground floor at St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith.</p>
<b>Surgery</b>	<p>Managed by your surgeon with the surgical care team at St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith.</p>
<b>Day of Surgery</b> (As indicated by your surgeon and the time of your surgery)	<p>Bed exercises, standing and walking in a frame commenced with the physiotherapist according to your surgeons postoperative instructions.</p> <p>Breathing exercises.</p>

<b>Day 1 Recovery Plan</b>	<p>Independent bed exercises commenced.</p> <p>Dress in your own clothes and shower with assistance provided by the nursing team.</p> <p>Walking with a frame and beginning to use crutches.</p> <p>Sitting in a chair for periods during the day.</p> <p>Breathing exercises.</p>
<b>Day 2 Recovery Plan</b>	<p>Independent bed exercises progressed.</p> <p>Dress in your own clothes and shower with any necessary assistance from the nursing team.</p> <p>Walking with crutches.</p> <p>Walking retraining and stairs practice.</p> <p>Sitting out of bed for all meals.</p> <p>Breathing exercises as required.</p>
<b>Day 3 Recovery Plan</b>	<p>Independent bed exercises progressed.</p> <p>Shower independently.</p> <p>Walking independently with crutches.</p> <p>Walking retraining and stair practice.</p> <p>Sitting out of bed for all meals.</p> <p>Check the discharge plan.</p> <p>Discharge home if able.</p>
<b>Day 4 Recovery Plan</b>	<p><b>Discharge home.</b></p> <p><b>Arrange to be collected at St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith at 10.00am.</b></p> <p>Commence home exercise plan.</p>
<b>Home Recovery Plan</b>	<p>Phone call follow up from the St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith Orthopaedic Care Team to ensure that you are home safely and progressing well.</p> <p>Arrange follow up care in the home or with your local private physiotherapy practice for progression of your recovery plan.</p>

## Your Recovery Plan: Going Home

It is important that you actively participate in your physiotherapy sessions so that you can meet the following criteria as soon as possible in order to discharge safely home. Timely discharge home is important to help improve your function, reduce the risk of infection and reduce the risk of deep vein thrombosis (clot in your leg).

***All the members of the Orthopaedic Care Team at St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith are with you every step of the way. The following discharge checklist is completed as an ongoing discussion with you and the relevant members of the Orthopaedic Care Team who are taking care of you.***

***These include:***

### Your Recovery Checklist

- You have recovered well from the anaesthetic procedures and the operation and you are medically stable.
- You are emptying your bladder and have normal bowel function.
- Your pain is managed effectively with the oral medications that have been prescribed by your surgeon.

### Physical Considerations

- You are getting in and out of bed correctly and independently.
- You are able to walk independently around the ward using crutches or a walking stick.
- You can safely go up and down stairs independently.
- You can safely perform personal activities of daily living, such as getting on/off toilet, showering and dressing with minimal assistance.

### Your Home

- Your home is prepared so you can be safely be discharged home.

## Discharge Home

**Discharge time is 10am, please arrange for someone to pick you up at this time.**

Your surgeon will see you prior to discharge and tell you when to arrange a follow-up appointment if you have not already made one. The time of your follow-up appointment after surgery will depend on your surgeon. A discharge letter will be given to you and to your GP when you are discharged from St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith. It is recommended you keep in touch with your GP.

The Orthopaedic Care Team will be involved with your care throughout your preparation, hospital stay and following discharge home. Your 'Discharge Information Sheet' – details all the necessary information regarding your wound management, pain management and when you can drive as recommended by your surgeon. The physiotherapy team will provide you with an exercise sheet and will ensure that you are able to continue on with your independent exercise plan at home.

### **Contact with the Orthopaedic Care Team Following Discharge from St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith**

The care provided by the Orthopaedic Care Team is extended to you following your discharge home from St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith. We want you to feel confident and safe about your discharge home in order to continue on with your recovery plan. This will be achieved with the members of the Orthopaedic Care Team who will educate you, prepare you and empower you for the entire journey. We understand that having our ongoing support and checking in with you at home can be helpful. A member of the Orthopaedic Care Team will call you after you have been discharged home to ensure your safety and comfort, answer any questions and address any of your concerns.

You will need a family member or friend who is able to help you for the first few days at home after your knee replacement surgery. You will experience improvements during your hospital stay that will continue progress when you return home in the months after your knee

replacement surgery. There is a gradual lessening of pain and the need for pain relief in the first six weeks after surgery. Any stiffness, swelling and your ability to move more easily will reduce as you return to a more independent lifestyle. Discharging home after knee replacement surgery will assist your recovery through regular independent activities.

## **Fatigue**

It is normal to feel fatigued and tired after knee replacement surgery. Your body will use a lot of energy for your recovery after knee replacement surgery. If you experience fatigue later in the morning or in the afternoons this is normal. Most knee replacement patients will need an afternoon rest. If this occurs just understand that this is a normal part of your recovery.

# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

## **What sort of anaesthetic will I have?**

You will have either a general anaesthetic or spinal anaesthetic. It is best to discuss your anaesthetic plan with your surgeon and the anaesthetist.

## **How long does the operation take?**

Knee replacement surgery normally takes between 60 and 90 minutes.

## **How long will I need to stay in hospital?**

Most patients need to stay in hospital 3-6 days following their surgery.

## **What is my recovery plan after my surgery?**

You will need to carefully carry out graded and comfortable mobility and strengthening exercises and specific functional exercises to improve the quality of your walking and other activities that are important to you. You will be shown exercises to carry out by yourself before surgery and during your hospital stay at St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith. Most patients continue their ongoing physiotherapy and rehabilitation as an 'outpatient' – this means you continue your physiotherapy rehabilitation from the safety and comfort of your home. You can choose to see your local private physiotherapist or continue your physiotherapy treatment at St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith.

## **When will the pain go away?**

Everyone's pain varies after knee replacement surgery – the amount of time before the pain goes away will be different for each individual. As a general guide your pain can be significantly less by approximately six weeks following your knee replacement surgery. You may

experience some ongoing intermittent pain symptoms at night or after increased activity e.g. a longer walk than normal or a session with your physiotherapist for progression of your recovery plan. You will gradually reduce the amount of pain relief that you require as your pain settles and you regain your independence. You may still require some pain relief either overnight or when exercising, but should aim to gradually wean off the prescribed pain relief following discussions with your GP and if required your surgeon.

### **How long will I be on the painkillers?**

Your GP and/or your surgeon will review your pain management plan throughout your recovery and advise about the best approach to reduce and cease prescribed pain relief. It is not uncommon to have some intermittent pain or discomfort symptoms in your leg muscles for up to six to nine months after surgery. These intermittent pain symptoms can be managed with over the counter pain relief. Check with you GP and/or surgeon regarding the safety of taking these medications.

### **When will the swelling go away?**

It normally can take up to approximately three to six months for the swelling to gradually go away. You can continue to apply ice packs to knee area and continue to rest throughout the day, especially after exercise or a walk, for the first six weeks after knee replacement surgery.

### **When can I stop using crutches or a walking stick after knee replacement surgery?**

The amount of assistance required gradually reduces within the first six weeks after knee replacement surgery. Slowly reducing the amount of support from two crutches to one crutch to a walking stick and then unaided occurs gradually. You may first walk with less assistance in the morning, but become tired in the afternoon and need the device again. The same concept applies to changing surfaces (carpet, tile, grass, pavement), inclines, or steps. It may be easier to walk in the house on a firm and predictable surface without a walking aid or crutches, but going outside on uneven and unpredictable surfaces

can be safer with crutches or a walking stick. An important indicator is to notice if you are walking with a limp. You should continue to use crutch(es) or a walking stick to avoid walking with a limp. Walking with crutches will be necessary before moving onto one crutch or a walking stick. Removing the amount of support too soon can delay your recovery and potentially result in an uneven walking pattern. It is highly recommended that crutches or a walking stick is used for as long as needed to achieve the required strength, flexibility, and even walking pattern. This understanding of the recovery process requires patience and understanding that every surgery and recovery is different.

### **Can I sleep on my side?**

This will depend on your surgeon's preferences. Your surgeon will tell you when it is safe to sleep on your side. Once your surgeon has let you know when it is safe to sleep on your side, you will start by sleeping on the side of your non-operated leg. Placing a pillow between your knees can make sleeping on your side more comfortable.

### **Can I shower with my wound?**

Yes you can. The dressing over your wound is waterproof, however if water gets soaked through the dressing it may need to be changed. You will need to keep your wound clean and dry for two weeks after your operation. You can contact the Orthopaedic Care Team at St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith for further information regarding additional dressings.

### **When can I walk without a stick/crutches?**

The most important aspect of your walking recovery is that you walk without a limp. You may have developed a limp while protecting your knee prior to your operation which may continue due to it becoming a habit. Therefore, unless specified, you are allowed to stop using one crutch or a walking stick when you are able to walk without a limp and you feel steady and safe. Your physiotherapist will advise you when you are ready to begin walking without a single crutch or walking stick. Weaning off the use of any walking aid is advisable. Also remember, people are more careful when they see someone with a crutch or walking stick, so continue using these when you are in crowds, on uneven ground or travelling on public transport until you are confident and strong.

**When can I return to driving?**

Your surgeon will advise when you can return to driving. This may be up to six weeks following your surgery. This is often due to certain prescribed pain medications that you may still be taking. Any reduction in your muscle strength and control may limit your ability to return to driving sooner. If you drive before you receive clearance from your surgeon, you may not be covered by your car insurance. If in doubt, please check with your surgeon and your car insurer.

**How long do I need off work?**

This depends on the type of work that you do. After returning home you will likely need a few weeks to recover before considering returning to lighter work duties. You may find that complicated work that requires concentration may be affected by your stronger prescribed pain medications. You should also not attempt to sit for more than 60 minutes at one time, so it is best if you can break up your working day if possible. Work that requires a great deal of moving around or long periods of being on your feet should not be attempted for approximately 6-8 weeks after knee replacement surgery.

**When can I start getting massages again?**

There should be no deep tissue massage on your legs for the first six weeks after surgery. You may also find it difficult or be unable to lie on your stomach on a massage table until after this time. Comfortable massage may be undertaken by the physiotherapist who is completing your rehabilitation after knee replacement surgery.

**What should I do if I have to go to the dentist?**

You must inform your dentist that you have had knee replacement surgery. You may need to be prescribed prophylactic antibiotics and cease any anti-coagulants.

**When can I return to sexual intimacy?**

You can return to this when you feel comfortable to. Please ask your surgeon for more information about safe positions for sexual intimacy.

## **When can I begin gym work/weights?**

Following knee replacement surgery you may begin cycling on a stationary bike when you are able to safely get on and off the bike and your surgeon and physiotherapist are comfortable for you to do so. In the first six weeks after your operation you will begin using light weights on your legs under supervision. You should begin with low weights and gradually increase them when exercising comfortably in the first six weeks after surgery. Always check with your physiotherapist prior to beginning weights or gym work.

It is not advisable to do any regular jogging, running or jumping activities after your knee replacement surgery, particularly for the first three to six months following surgery. You will need to check with your surgeon regarding returning to impact sports as they may affect your knee replacement in the long term.

## **When can I fly on a plane?**

Long haul flights are generally best left for 12 weeks following knee replacement surgery. You should check with your surgeon what their preference is. Keep your TED stockings to wear when you fly. Our Orthopaedic Care Team can arrange telehealth consultations before and after knee replacement surgery for patients who are discharged home and need to travel long distances.

## **Will I set off the metal detector scanner at the airport?**

It depends on the sensitivity of the scanner. You will need to let security know that you have had knee replacement surgery.

**Remember, for other questions about anything in this information guide or any aspect of your knee replacement surgery, please contact the physiotherapist at St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith.**

**Telephone: 0403 211 931**

**Monday–Friday 8am–4pm**

**Email: [griffithphysio@svphsahs.com.au](mailto:griffithphysio@svphsahs.com.au)**

# Appendix 1

## **Car Transfers – Getting into and out of a car safely following knee replacement surgery**

### **Getting into a car**

1. Approach the car using your mobility aid (crutches or walker).
2. Turn so that your back is facing the car and step backwards until you can feel the back of the seat against the legs.
3. Place one hand on the car seat and one hand on the overhead door handle. ***Do not use the car door for support.***
4. Lower yourself slowly to the seat with your operated leg slightly forward.
5. Scoot backwards. You may need a foam cushion to raise the height of the seat.
6. Once your thighs are fully supported, assist your legs into the car one at a time.
7. Always remember to fasten your seatbelt.

### **Getting out of a car**

1. Unfasten your seatbelt.
2. Assist your legs out of the car one at a time. ***It's okay if your legs don't immediately touch the ground.***
3. Using the overhead door handle, scoot forward so that your feet are touching the ground.
4. Using your prescribed mobility (crutches or walker) stand and move away slowly from the car. **Make sure that you are on level ground.**









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