



ACL Surgery FAQ

Q. Why should I come to HSS for my surgery?

A. HSS is the top orthopedic hospital according to *U.S. News & World Report* (2011). Our nursing staff has also been recognized with the prestigious Magnet Award for Nursing Excellence.

At HSS, you will find the best surgeons, the best hospital, and the best nurses – a winning combination for successful outcomes.

Q. How long will I be in the hospital?

A. Typically ACL surgery is an ambulatory surgery - you go home the same day of the surgery.

Q. What type of anesthetic will I need?

A. Typically ACL surgery is performed with a spinal anesthetic at Hospital for Special Surgery. You will be sedated and can sleep through the operation. General anesthesia is usually not necessary.

Q. Will I need crutches and a brace after the surgery?

A. Patients go home with crutches and a brace. If your meniscus does not need to be repaired, I typically remove the brace when I see you for your first follow up 10-14 days after the surgery. I recommend that you use the crutches until you can walk without a limp. This usually takes approximately 1 month from the time of surgery. In some cases, crutches are needed for longer periods of time to protect repaired tissue such as in the setting of a meniscus repair.

Q. When can I start running?

A. I typically allow in-line running (no cutting sports) 3 months after the operation.

Q. When can I start playing golf?

A. I typically allow patient to play golf 7 months after the surgery (just like Tiger Woods!).



Q. When can I return to cutting sports?

A. I typically allow return to cutting sports 9 months after the operation.

Q. When can I shower?

A. I do not like your stitches to get wet. Therefore, you may shower when you get home, but the incision will need to be covered. I recommend using saran wrap around the area to prevent it from getting wet. The stitches will be removed at the first follow up appointment 7-14 days after the surgery; thereafter, it is safe to get the incision wet.

Q. How long should I use the pain medication?

A. This is different for each patient; some are able to use Tylenol or Advil after you leave the hospital, and others require pain medication as needed for 2-3 weeks. A general rule is that you should try to decrease your use of these medications as time passes.

Q. When can I take my dressing off the knee?

A. Please take off the dressing 2 days after the operation.

Q. When can I drive?

A. You should not drive as long as you are taking narcotic pain medication. If it is your left knee, you can resume driving when you feel your reaction times are back to normal (typically 1 week). If it is your right knee, usually allow driving 4-6 weeks after surgery.

Q. I feel "clicking" inside the knee, is this normal?

A. The clicking is a result of the soft tissue moving across the joint. This sensation usually diminishes as your muscles get stronger.

Q. I am experiencing a lot of swelling, is this normal?

A. Fluid can accumulate in the legs due to the effect of gravity. To combat this, you should elevate your legs at night by lying on your back and placing pillows under the legs so that they are above your heart.



Q. When can I return to work?

A. It depends on your occupation. It is never a mistake to take more time off in the beginning of your recovery, as it will give you time to focus on your surgery. I recommend taking at least 7 days off of work after ACL surgery if you have a sedentary job. If you are on your feet, you may need 4-6 weeks or more before you are ready to return to work.

Q. When can I go to the dentist?

A. Please wait until 6 weeks after surgery, as the joint is still healing and there is increased blood flow to this area.

Q. Can I travel?

A. In general, I like to see you before you fly. If you are traveling by car, you should be sure to take frequent breaks so that you don't feel too stiff when getting up. On an airplane, I like you to take a couple of walks during the flight. Having an aisle and bulkhead seat will help you get more space.

Q. I notice an area of numbness around my knee - is this normal?

A. You may notice a small area of numbness on the outside area of the knee incision. This may or may not resolve over time.

Q. My knee still feels stiff 6 weeks after the operation - is this normal?

A. Surgical healing usually takes 6-8 weeks. However, the tissues remain swollen which can cause discomfort for some time. This is usually manageable with over the counter medications like Aleve or Tylenol although sometimes prescribed pain pills are necessary. Over time, the knee tissues begin to soften and become more natural.

Q. Is there a better time of year to have the surgery?

A. This is a personal decision; some patients like to have the surgery in good weather so that they may walk outdoors as part of their recovery; others prefer to do the surgery in the winter so that they may recover in time to participate in springtime activities.