

This post operative management aims to regain patient's full function. It is possible if we restore full functional capacity of the joint and proper limb function, thus avoiding overburdening of the treated tissues.

The rehabilitation plan should be chosen individually and depend on the following:

- the severity of the injury that causes dysfunction (eg. tearing of one or more ligaments),
- the time between the injury and surgery and the defence mechanisms of the locomotor system (contractions, muscle weakening),
- surgery technique,
- age and physical activity of the patient.

The course of this programme and its intensity depend on the time of tissue and scar healing after the surgery, as well as individual sensitivity to the irritation (eg. inflammatory state - swelling).

This is why post operative rehabilitation can be divided into the following stages:

1. early post operative stage (from the discharge to circa 4 weeks),
2. function restoration stage (from the 4-6th week to the 8-12th weeks),
3. full function and recreational activity stage (3-6 months).

In the early stage we administer:

- full rest of the limb (unless the doctor says different in the discharge card),
- ice compresses up to 5 times a day for about 15-20 minutes,
- slight elevation of the limb,
- rehabilitation:
 - of the joints that have not been operated on in order to improve circulation and prevent the side effects of immobilization,
 - isometric exercises of the muscles to prevent atrophy,
 - following doctor's advice - specific movements of the operated joint.

In the stage of function restoration we administer:

a) exercises:

- actively increasing the range of motion in the treated joint,
- increasing the strength of the muscles in the whole limb,
- that stretch the contractions subsequent to immobilization and swelling,
- that stabilize the joint in order for the patient to feel secure and prevent the limb from overburdening.

b) cooling the joint after exercises,

c) gradually increasing loads on the treated limb to reach its full and proper supporting function.

In the full function and recreational activity stage we administer:

- exercises in the full weight bearing,
- gradually more difficult exercises,
- strength and endurance exercises,
- to be careful with positioning and alignment of the limb.

Written by: Michal Kabzinski

Rehabilitation after surgery

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