Care After Hip Arthroscopy

This handout will explain how to care for yourself at home after hip arthroscopy.

Going Home
You will go home the day of surgery. You should try to rest as much as you can and elevate your legs. This will help reduce any pain and swelling.

You may notice some swelling in your hip, thigh, or down your leg past your knee for a few days after surgery. If the swelling gets worse, decrease your activities.

You may have bruising in your pelvic or hip area. You may also have some mild to moderate cramping in the thigh muscles for the first few days. This is normal and will go away.

Numbness on the outside of the thigh is common and normally resolves slowly over a few days to a few weeks.

The leg can also feel cooler than normal, which is from reduced activity. Your leg may feel cold and look a little discolored. This can be normal after hip arthroscopy. This is more related to the decreased weight bearing and limited movement after surgery than to the surgery itself. As your activity level gets back to normal, the temperature and color changes should resolve as well.

Weight Bearing
For the first two weeks after surgery, you should walk with 20% of your body weight on the surgical leg and your foot flat on the ground. Your physical therapist can show you how to do this. You should use crutches or another assistive device unless your doctor or physical therapist allows you to stop using it.

All patients need to remain on crutches for at least 2 weeks. Other patients may need crutches for up to four weeks. You will be told how much weight you can put on your leg when you go home.

You will start physical therapy 2-5 days after surgery. You will learn hip and leg exercises you can do at home.

Pain Control
You will go home with a cold therapy device. To prevent freezer burn, do not put the ice pad directly on your skin. Try to ice often for the first 72 hours to help decrease pain and swelling.

You may get a prescription for narcotic pain medicine before surgery. Please get this filled before surgery to use after the surgery. The goal is to help you manage your pain, not make you pain-free. **Do not** drive until you have been off the narcotic pain medicine for at least 24 hours.

You may also get an anti-inflammatory medicine, such as naproxen or indomethacin, to help with pain and swelling. You will take these for four to six weeks after surgery.

Driving
You must be off all opioid pain medicine before you can drive. Tylenol, naproxen, or other anti-inflammatory drugs are okay to take while driving. If the surgery involves your driving leg, you must be able to move comfortably from gas to brake and be able to get in and out of the car easily. This often takes 2-3 weeks but can take as long as 6 weeks.

Incision Care
Your incisions will be covered with a dressing. You can take the dressing off 48 hours after surgery.

Bathing
You can shower 72 hours after surgery. Cover the incisions with plastic wrap, Glad® Press-n-Seal or waterproof band-aids. This will keep the area dry. If using plastic wrap, tape the edges down. This will keep water from getting under the plastic wrap. After you shower, cover the incisions with clean band-aids or dressings. Do not use any creams or ointments on the incisions.
No soaking in a bathtub or swimming pool for at least 4 weeks. No swimming in hot tubs, lakes, or ponds for at least 4-6 weeks, until your incision is completely healed.

Returning to Work
You and your doctor will decide when you can return to work. Return to work timeline varies depending on the type of job you have.

Follow Up Visit
You will have a follow-up visit at one of the sports medicine clinics in 10-14 days. Your stitches will be removed during the visit.

When to Call
Call the clinic if you notice:

- Redness, warmth or foul-smelling drainage from the incision site
- Fever over 100.5° F for 2 readings taken 4 hours apart
- Bleeding that is not controlled by direct pressure
- Foot or leg becomes pale, blue or cool to touch
- You have pain and/or swelling behind the knee or in the calf area

Who to Call
If you have questions, please contact your provider through MyChart or call your provider listed in your After Visit Summary or After Hospital Care Plan. For a list of UW Health Clinics, visit www.uwhealth.org/.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 9/2026 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#6031.