

Non Weight Bearing after Orthopaedic Surgery at The Royal Bournemouth Hospital



This leaflet from the Orthopaedic Directorate has been designed to answer any questions you may have

Please bring this booklet into the hospital with you

Introduction:

This booklet tells you about having an orthopaedic operation which will require you to be non-weight bearing at the Royal Bournemouth Hospital. It is intended for patients who have decided to have surgery after discussing the options, benefits and possible risks with their Consultant or Surgeon.

We have developed this guide to help answer any questions that you may have about your operation and recovery afterwards. It will be useful during each of your hospital visits, so please bring it with you.

This booklet is a general guide and there may be alterations in your management made by your surgeon, anaesthetist or therapist. These alterations should take priority.

All members of the Orthopaedics Team are committed to providing you with the highest standard in care and we look forward to welcoming you.

This guide book belongs to:

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Your orthopaedic consultant is:

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Appointment Dates:

Surgery:

Follow up:

Other:

Goals:

1:

2:

3:

We encourage your questions and enquiries;
please write them here to ask at your next meeting

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Educational information

What does non weight bearing mean?

Non weight bearing means you must not put any weight through the operated leg or foot when you are walking. This includes when you stand up and sit down. You must be compliant with this for the length of time specified by your surgeon.

Why am I not allowed to take weight through my operated leg

There are many different operations which may require you to be non-weight bearing for a period of time. This might be because you have had surgery to repair ligaments or tendons, a joint replacement or surgery to fuse a joint. It is important to make sure you don't put weight through your foot or leg for the length of time advised. This is to protect it and give it time to heal. Failure to do so is likely to cause your operation to fail.

Before your surgery

Pre-admission Assessment

The Pre-admission department from Royal Bournemouth Hospital will contact you with the appointment information. If you have any questions about your appointment please call their department. You can find their details on the useful contacts section at the back of this booklet.

The visit to the pre-admission assessment clinic may require you to be at the hospital for several hours. It is important to attend this appointment or your surgery will be postponed or cancelled. In the clinic, you will be officially registered for your hospital admission and a nursing assessment and preoperative tests will be done. These tests may include.

- X-rays
- Blood and urine tests
- ECG (Electrocardiogram)

You may be seen by other health care professionals during the visit. These may include:

- Pre-Assessment Specialist Nurse
- Anaesthetist
- Ward Doctor

Please bring the following to your pre-operative assessment appointment:

- All your current medications
- A list of allergies including the type of reaction
- Next of kin details and contact numbers

Actions to take before your surgery

Once you have your date for surgery you can do several things to aid preparation for your operation and to assist with your recovery.

Smoking

Smoking has been shown to delay wound healing and increase complications after surgery. Patients who stop smoking benefit from long term improvements to general health, decrease the risks associated with anaesthetic and have a better outcome from surgery.

If you are interested in stopping smoking please speak to your pre-assessment nurse or GP for advice and services available.

Weight management

Even though you may feel fit and healthy at your current weight, patients with a higher body mass index (BMI) are more likely to experience potentially serious complications both during and after surgery.

If you are keen to lose weight before your surgery please speak to your pre assessment nurse or GP for advice and services available.

Cancellation

If you are unable to attend your appointment or surgery, please contact us immediately so that we can offer this to another patient.

Planning ahead for how you will manage once home

Non-weight bearing will affect not only your mobility but your ability to complete your usual daily tasks. No matter what you are doing you **MUST NOT** put weight through your operated leg. How you are able to manage after the operation will be influenced by your upper body strength, the strength in your opposite leg and your balance as well as what support you have from family, friends or care at home.

You will be assessed by a member of the therapy team whilst you are in hospital to ensure you are safe and can manage once home. It is a good idea to have planned this out before you are admitted to make your stay in hospital as straight forward as possible.

Below we will discuss different aspects of daily life which you should consider before you come into hospital. **If you have concerns regarding managing non weight bearing after your operation, please inform your pre-assessment nurse so they can make a referral to the therapy team before your operation.**

How will I move around?

Many people are able to hop around on their non-operated leg with the help of a walking aid.

The therapist who reviews you will provide the most suitable walking aid to ensure you can mobilise safely at home. Depending on the strength of your upper body, the strength of your opposite leg and your balance they may provide you with elbow crutches. They will look at your ability to hop with these ensuring you do not put any weight through your operated leg. If you require more support they can provide you with a walking frame instead.

If you cannot manage safely with either of these they may need to consider other options which would be discussed with you. Please be aware this may prolong your stay in hospital.

Prior to your admission it is wise to make space to be able to move easily throughout your property. You should consider whether there is adequate space in your kitchen, bathroom, bedroom and corridors for you to mobilise with a walking aid such as elbow crutches or a walking frame.

How will I manage steps or stairs?

If you have steps or stairs at home you will need to consider how you will manage these.

If you have a step to access your property the therapists can show you how to hop up and down these using elbow crutches. If you do not think you will be able to manage this they can advise you on a technique to get up one step into a property using a stool or chair.

If you have stairs, again you may be able to hop up these. A therapist will practice this with you in hospital. If you feel you could not manage this then you may want to consider if you could sleep downstairs for the duration of your time non-weight bearing or to go up and down them by shuffling on your bottom. Please bear in mind if you do the stairs on your bottom you will need to be able to get up from the floor once at the top while non-weight bearing. Placing a seat at the top of your stairs to lift your bottom onto before standing can make this easier.

How will I get washed and dressed?

It is important to consider what will be the safest way for you to get washed and dressed after your operation. For most people this is to strip wash at the sink, due to difficulties getting in and out of a shower cubicle or bath. You may wish to place a chair or stool in the bathroom to allow you to sit whilst you wash. If you are non-weight bearing because of foot/ankle surgery you may wish to stand but place the knee of your operated leg on the stool or chair to help you balance without putting your foot to the floor.

You should also consider if you will be able to get on and off your toilet using only your non-operated leg. If your toilet is particularly low or you have nothing to push up on the therapy team can supply you with equipment to assist with this. They will be able to assess you with this when you are in hospital.

How will I cook/prepare meals?

If you live alone or will be alone at home for parts of the day, you may wish to place a stool or a chair in the kitchen so that you can sit down while you prepare food and wash up. If you are non-weight bearing because of foot/ankle surgery you may wish to stand but place the knee of your operated leg on the stool or chair to help you balance without putting your foot to the floor.

You will not be able to carry a plate or cup whilst hopping with crutches or a walking frame so you may want to sit and eat your food in the kitchen.

Some people find it useful to use a rucksack or an apron with a front pocket to carry a drinks bottle, flask or other items through to another room.

How will I do shopping?

It is unlikely you will be able to do shopping yourself whilst you are non-weight bearing. You should consider if there is a friend or family member who can do this for you during this period. Alternatively you could make online shopping orders to be delivered to your home.

What if I want to go outdoors?

If you are using a walking frame these are not designed for outdoors and even on elbow crutches hopping longer distances outdoors is very tiring. If you wish to go out it may be useful to have use of a wheelchair while you are non-weight bearing. This is not something the hospital can provide you with; however it is possible to hire wheelchairs from the Red Cross. The Red Cross may also have other pieces of equipment that may be useful to you.

Arriving for your surgery

Day of surgery

Eating and drinking:

Please follow the instructions given to you about when to stop eating and drinking before your operation. If there is food or liquid in your stomach during your anaesthetic, it could come up into the back of your throat and damage your lungs. If you have not followed the correct fasting instructions your operation will be cancelled.

If you normally take prescribed medicines in the morning please continue to take these on the day of surgery, apart from tablets you have been specifically told not to take by the pre-assessment team. Take them with a sip of still water.

Please do not drink alcohol for 24 hours before surgery.

Arrival:

You will come into hospital on the same day as your operation. You will need to present yourself to the Sandbourne Admissions Suite to be admitted for surgery. Some operations requiring you to be non-weight bearing are performed as day surgeries and so you are normally able to go home on the day of the operation. You may, however, be required to stay overnight depending on the procedure, the time of your operation and your recovery.

Please note the time you are instructed to arrive at hospital is not the time your operation will take place. It is necessary for you to come a few hours before the time of your operation so that you can be admitted and prepared for surgery.

When you arrive at the Sandbourne Admissions Suite a nurse will check you in. You may also be visited by the surgeon and anaesthetist before your operation. You will then be asked to put on a hospital gown. All patients who are able will walk to theatre for their operation accompanied by a member of our nursing staff. You will be asked to remove any loose items such as glasses and false nails prior to your surgery.

Your surgery

Anaesthetic

The exact anaesthetic used will depend on your surgery. Your anaesthetist will discuss with you what type of anaesthetic is the most appropriate for you, and can answer any questions you have.

A general anaesthetic is most commonly used; this means you would be unconscious throughout the operation. Alongside this a nerve block is often used which assists with pain control. A nerve block is an injection of local anaesthetic into a nerve and will affect sensation and muscle strength in the leg and foot. It can take 24 to 48 hours before this wears off completely.

Surgical Procedure

There are a number of different operations which require people to be non-weight bearing afterwards. Your surgeon will discuss the exact surgical procedure with you.

What happens after the operation (while I am in hospital)?

Some people are able to go home on the day of surgery after an operation which requires you to be non-weight bearing, but you may need to stay in hospital overnight. This decision will be made based on the operation you have done, the time of your surgery, your recovery and your home situation.

After your surgery

On leaving the operating theatre you will be taken to recovery. Here you will be nursed one to one until you have come round from the anaesthetic. They will then transfer you to your designated ward. Once on the ward you will be given something to eat and drink. The nurses looking after you will continue to assess you. When they deem it safe for you to get up for the first time after your surgery they will contact the therapy team to come and assess you.

A member of the therapy team will discuss your home situation with you and how you intend to manage on discharge. This is where your planning prior to your operation (discussed in the section Before Your Surgery) will be useful.

The therapist who sees you will assess your mobility and provide a suitable walking aid for you to take home. They will practice how to use this walking aid with you on the ward. They will also assess you for additional equipment if this is deemed necessary. They will make sure you have a plan and the knowledge to manage your necessary daily activities once home.

What happens when I go home?

Rest and elevation

It is vital to keep the swelling under control for your comfort, and to help the healing process. For the first 2 weeks after surgery we recommend that you aim to elevate your leg for 50 minutes in every hour, ideally at the level of your heart. As a guide if you are not getting washed/dressed, mobilising to the toilet or preparing food you should have your leg elevated.

Mobilising

You must make sure you do not put weight on your operated leg at any time. You should only use the walking aid provided to you by your therapist. This should be used at all times, following the technique practiced with your therapist on the ward.

On the following page you will find a reminder on the technique to follow when using a walking frame or elbow crutches.

NWB using a walking frame

1. Stand holding onto the frame with your the foot of your operated leg clear of the floor
2. Place the frame out in front of you
3. Leaning your weight through the frame hop forward keeping your operated leg clear of the floor



NWB using elbow crutches

1. Stand holding the crutches with your elbows in to your sides
2. Place both crutches forward, keeping them shoulder width apart
3. Lean down through the crutches and hop to the crutches keeping the foot of your operated leg clear of the floor



Steps/Stairs

If you have steps or stairs at home, the therapist who saw you on the ward will advise you how to complete these once home.

If you were deemed safe to be able to hop up and down a step(s) (and practiced this with your therapist) you will find a reminder of the technique to use below.

To go up steps NWB

1. Take your weight through your crutch and bannister. Keep your operated leg out behind you
2. Hop onto the step with your good (non-operated) leg. Take care not to put weight on your operated leg
3. Lastly bring your crutch onto the same step



To come down steps NWB

1. Place your crutch down onto the step below. Keep your operated leg out in front of you.
2. Take your weight through your crutch and bannister
3. Lower your good (non-operated) leg down onto the same step. Take care not to put weight on your operated leg



The above technique can also be done using 2 elbow crutches however this is more challenging and should only be attempted if assessed as safe to do so by your therapist.

Pain Relief

The nursing staff will provide you with pain relief and advise you on how often you can take these. You should follow this advice to ensure you are comfortable to do your daily activities. Please note you may need to take pain relief for several weeks after surgery. If you have any issues or side effects with the pain relief please contact your GP.

Dressings

The type of dressings you have will depend on the procedure carried out. The nurse looking after you will advise you how to care for these on discharge, and will advise you regarding follow-up for wound checks and removal of stitches if required.

Whatever dressing you have, it is important to keep it clean and dry. There are commercially available waterproof protectors for casts and dressings that you can buy online, or the therapy team can provide you with information on where to get these.

Clinic review

You will be asked to come back for a follow up appointment in an outpatient clinic between 2 to 6 weeks after your operation. Normally you will receive this appointment date in the post once you have returned home. At this appointment your surgeon or a member of their team will review your progress. Sometimes they will have an x-ray taken to check how things are healing. They will advise you when you will be able to start to take weight through your leg again. The time spent non-weight bearing will depend on your procedure and how you are healing.

Frequently asked questions

If I have any questions who should I contact?

If you have any questions about returning to activities you can ask your surgeon or therapist on the day of the operation. Use the notes section at the front of this leaflet to note down these questions and any instructions given to you by your surgeon or therapist.

What should I bring with me to hospital?

What to bring

- This booklet
- All current medications in their original boxes
- Elbow crutches or walking sticks if you use them
- Trainers or flat heeled shoes
- Mobile phones/books
- Telephone numbers of friends/relatives
- Glasses and case
- Loose fitting clothing which will go over your dressings

Please do not bring

- Unnecessary jewellery
- Large sums of money
- Laptop computers
- Any other valuables

Please remove nail varnish and piercings.

Useful Contacts

Royal Bournemouth Switchboard: **01202 303626**

Ward 12: **0300 019 4770** (Mon - Fri - Anytime)

Sandbourne Suite: **0300 019 6104** (Mon - Fri - 8am to 9pm)

Pre-Assessment: **0300 019 4102** (Mon - Fri - 9.00am to 4.00pm)

Orthopaedic Admissions Dept.: **0300 019 4919** Option 2 (Mon - Fri - 9am to 4pm)

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