

Why Won't My Knee Bend After Surgery?

YOUR MUSCLES! To be blunt; the pain from your muscles and the fear of pain.

There is only one reason why your knee does not want to bend the first 6 weeks after surgery: your muscles and the pain associated with stretching your muscles. There are many reasons why your muscles don't want to let you bend your knee but it's 100% related to your muscles; not the implant, not swelling per se, and not scar tissue.

Why Won't Your Muscles Let Your Knee Bend?

1. Your muscles were likely stiff before surgery.
 - Arthritis causes the muscles to get stiff and most patients have lost motion before surgery.
 - Pulling on a stiff muscle causes pain from stretching.
2. Your muscles are irritated during surgery.
 - Even though muscles are not cut, they are stretched during surgery, causing irritation and pain.
3. Swelling in the knee irritates the muscles.
 - Swelling does not prevent bending but irritates muscles, making them resistant to movement.

Pain and Muscle Response

Pain is from stretching, inflammation, and swelling. The pain makes you not want to bend your knee.

What Can You Do?

1. Try to relax while bending your knee.
 - Relaxing allows muscles to lengthen and the knee to bend.
2. Control your breathing.
 - Holding your breath tightens muscles and increases pain.
3. Avoid tightening your muscles.
 - Contracting muscles increases pain and makes bending harder.
4. Premedicate.
 - Take anti-inflammatories or pain pills before therapy or home exercises.
5. Keep moving.
 - Frequent movement prevents muscles from stiffening.
6. Use time, not force.
 - Bend to discomfort threshold and hold. Avoid pushing into severe pain.
7. Do not over exercise in the first 6 weeks.
 - Muscles are too irritated for strengthening. Focus on range of motion first. After 6 weeks you can start strengthening.