

Frequently Asked Questions – Total Joint Replacement

The Basics

How do I know if I need a joint replacement?

Joint pain alone is not a sufficient enough reason for having a joint replacement. Prolonged pain (more than 6 months) that does not improve with conservative non-surgical means, and affects your normal movement and day-to-day life, may qualify you for a joint replacement. This is a personal decision made by consulting your primary care physician and orthopedic surgeon.

What are the risks of surgery?

There are general risks with any type of surgery. They include, but are not limited to, the possibility of blood clots in the legs (DVTs); blood clots in the lungs (PEs); blood clots in the tissues around the incision (hematoma); uncontrollable bleeding; wound infection; heart attack or stroke, pneumonia. We have protocols in place to decrease the risks of having these complications.

How long will a new joint last?

Studies show that most joint replacement patients can expect their new joint to last them over 20 years.

Preparing for Surgery

How will I know what to do to prepare for surgery?

Your surgeon's office staff will provide you with information on how to obtain medical clearance for your surgery. You will also receive a call from a nurse at the hospital who will gather information from you, as well as provide you with further instructions on what to do to prepare for the surgery. They will guide you on eating and drinking requirements, skin cleaning requirements, and schedule you for COVID testing if needed. You will be asked to attend an information session regarding the type of surgery you are scheduled to have. This session is sometimes done electronically.

When do I need to do my COVID-19 test? Where can I get it done?

A COVID-19 test will be arranged for you at the hospital (if not already done by your primary care doctor). This will need to be done 48-96 hours before surgery. You will be contacted by the hospital to schedule the test.

What types of drinks can I have the night before surgery?

We recommend clear liquids up to 2 hours before your surgery time. If you are diabetic or have digestive problems, 4 hours before your surgery time.

Examples of clear liquids are:

- Water
- Gatorade (NOT red or purple)
- Sodas
- Gelatin (NOT red or purple AND WITHOUT fruit)
- Tea/Coffee (NO cream)
- Juices WITHOUT pulp (apple, white grape)
- Popsicles (NOT red or purple AND NOT containing fruit particles or cream)

How do I prepare my skin for the procedure?

Use a special cleaning substance called Hibiclens with every shower starting the evening before surgery and again on the morning of your surgery. (Total of 2 showers).

Where on my body do I wash with Hibiclens?

You should wash from the neck down. Avoid using the Hibiclens on your face or to wash your genitals as it can irritate sensitive areas.

Do I have to change my sheets after using the Hibiclens?

We recommend changing your sheet after using the Hibiclens the evening before surgery.

Do I need clean towels and washcloth for each shower?

Yes, you should use a clean washcloth and a clean towel with each Hibiclens shower.

Do I bring my own medications to the hospital?

You do not need to bring your own medications to the hospital. Your medications will be

administered to you there. If a medication is on your list and is not available in the hospital's pharmacy, you will be instructed to bring that medication with you to the hospital, on the morning of surgery, in its original container from the pharmacy. The medication will be collected by your nurse and verified by the hospital's pharmacy. It will then be dispensed to you by your nurse. You should NOT take any medications on your own while in the hospital, without the approval of your nurse.

Do I take my Insulin and other diabetic medications before I come to hospital?

You should not take any diabetic medications, including Insulin, on the morning of surgery. Instructions regarding your medications will be given to you by your primary care provider, and verified during the pre-operative phone call with the nurse.

Surgery and the Hospital Stay

How long does a THR surgery take?

A THR takes 1.5 - 2.5 hours.

How long does a TKR surgery take?

A TKR takes 1 - 1.5 hours.

How will my wound be closed?

Different surgeons have different ways of closing the wound. Your wound may be closed with absorbable internal sutures (on the inside layers) and skin glue on the outside or you may have internal absorbable sutures and staples on the outside.

What type of anesthesia will I get?

The anesthesia type preferred for a total joint replacement is spinal anesthesia (injection of numbing medicine into the lower back). This is usually done along with sedation (medicine that makes you sleep, while breathing on your own, with no breathing machine).

Some patients are not able to safely have spinal anesthesia and will get general anesthesia. General anesthesia requires a breathing machine as patients do not breathe on their own. This decision is made by the surgeon and anesthesiologist (doctor who does the anesthesia), after a review of your medical information and physical assessment.

How long will I stay in the hospital?

Total joint replacement patients usually have an overnight stay in the hospital. Some patients might stay an additional day if they have a change in their chronic medical condition or the

development of an unforeseen issue. Some patients may be able to go home on the day of surgery if they meet the requirements for a safe discharge.

How will you manage my pain?

You will be given different types of pain medication starting in the pre-op area on the morning of surgery. These medications manage the different types of pain that is expected. Your surgeon will prescribe these medications for you to have after your surgery is over as well. Your medications will be adjusted by the orthopedic practitioners based on how you are doing and what you are feeling. Some of the medications will be automatically administered by your nurse at set times. Others, such as narcotic medications will be given to you at a set time frame when you have requested it. You will be given prescriptions for a one week supply of pain medication once you are discharged from the hospital. Your surgeon will assess for the need for further pain medication need at your follow up visit. If you normally see a pain specialist, you must secure an appointment with your pain specialist for 1 week after discharge, to ensure that your pain management regimen will not be interrupted.

Can my family member spend the night in the hospital with me?

Typically an adult family member is allowed to spend the night. Currently, Due to COVID-19 guidelines, the visitor policy has been revised and visitors are not allowed in the hospital. The visitor policy will be revisited and updated as COVID-19 conditions change.

Recovery

How long does it take to fully recover from a joint replacement surgery?

Recovery following a joint replacement is a continual process that involves gradual progress. However, a full recovery is normally achieved between 6 and 12 months. Very few patients will need walking assistance after they fully recover. Many people can return to work between three and eight weeks depending on strength, stamina and pain reduction. Recovery time also depends on your overall health, activity level and medical conditions before surgery.

Do I have to continue to use my Incentive Spirometer at home? How often?

We recommend that you continue to use the spirometer at home until you are able to get around comfortably and your activity increases. We recommend 5 times every hour to help to prevent pneumonia.

Will I need to take blood thinners?

Yes, total joint replacement patients are at a higher risk of developing blood clots so they are

required to take a blood thinning medication for 2 – 4 weeks after surgery. Your doctor will decide which one is best for you.

Do I have to wear those white stockings when I get home? For how long?

You should wear the compression stockings (white hose) 12-24 hrs/day until your follow up post-operative visit at the surgeon's office. Remove for at least 30 minutes daily for bathing if needed.

When can I drive after surgery?

Driving after discharge from the hospital is determined by your surgeon at your follow-up post-operative visit. This visit is usually 1-2 weeks after discharge.

When can I shower after discharge?

Showering is based on the preference of each surgeon. Specific showering instructions will be given to you prior to you leaving the hospital at discharge.

Do I change my dressing at home and will I get supplies?

Dressing care is based on the preference of each surgeon. Specific care instructions will be given to you prior to you leaving the hospital at discharge.

Should I avoid physical activity after recovering from surgery?

No. Exercising is strongly encouraged following surgery. You should get about 30 minutes of low-impact aerobic exercise at least three times a week. Walking, biking and swimming are all examples of appropriate exercise for a joint replacement patient. Your doctor will work with you to develop a safe exercise regime after surgery.

Will I need to do Physical Therapy after a THR or TKR?

Total knee replacement (TKR) patients are required to have physical therapy after surgery to improve and strengthen the muscles surrounding the knee joint, and to improve the motion and functioning of the knee joint.

Total hip replacement (THR) patients do not always require physical therapy initially. This need is sometimes determined by your surgeon's preference. Patients who are identified as needing physical therapy, will be informed prior to surgery or during the hospital stay.

How do I avoid problems going through the airport with an artificial knee?

You will still need to follow the screening protocols at the airport. You may obtain a card from your surgeon that you can provide as proof of having a joint prosthesis.

When is it safe to resume sex after surgery?

Your surgeon will let you know at your follow up visit when sexual relations may be safely resumed.

Do I need antibiotics before each dental visit after my surgery?

Remember to tell your dentist that you have had a joint replacement when you make your dental appointments. You may need to have antibiotics prior to dental work.

Medical Equipment

How do I get the equipment that I will need after surgery?

With a rolling walker, physical therapy will arrange for this to be delivered your room. With a 3-in-1 bedside commode, a case manager or on-site durable medical equipment (DME) liaison will arrange for this and have it delivered to your room if you need it.

Do I need to buy equipment ahead of time?

You do not need to purchase a walker or bedside commode (3-in-1) prior to surgery as they can be provided to you after surgery if approved by your insurance company. Shower chairs and tub benches are not covered by insurances and can be purchased at any local pharmacy if you think you will need one.