
FAQ – Total Joint Replacement

BEFORE YOUR SURGERY

Will you pre-certify my surgery with my insurance company?

Your insurance benefits will be verified by our benefits department to make sure you are being scheduled at the correct facility. As a courtesy, we will pre-certify your procedure with your insurance company if necessary. This is typically done approximately one to two weeks prior to surgery.

What tests need to be done prior to surgery?

Our surgery scheduler will contact you regarding any appointments that need to be completed prior to surgery. These must be done within 30 days of your procedure. Pre-Op testing may include: lab work, an electrocardiogram (EKG), physical therapy evaluation, joint education class and a physical by your primary care physician (if your physician is on staff at the facility where you are having surgery) or hospitalist (physician on staff at the facility where you are having surgery) prior to surgery. Our office will arrange all these appointments for you. If you see any other specialists such as a cardiologist or a pulmonologist, you also will need to be cleared by them before your procedure.

What about medications prior to surgery?

We ask that you stop taking any medications that thin your blood 2 weeks prior to surgery. These are medications such as naproxen (Aleve), nabumetone (Relafen), or ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin). Medications such as Aspirin, Coumadin, or Plavix may require special arrangements for discontinuing. Please contact the physician that prescribed those medications for you for instructions. Also, please stop all vitamins and herbal supplements (including tea) prior to surgery.

You will be admitted to the hospital the morning of your surgery. You cannot eat or drink anything (including gum) after midnight the night before your surgery. All necessary medications such as blood pressure medications should be taken the morning of your surgery with a sip of water. Diabetic medications require special dosing. Please contact your primary care physician for instructions.

Surgical Site:

Do not shave your operative leg for one week prior to surgery. If you have any insect bites, animal scratches, rashes, or acne on the operative site the morning of surgery, your procedure may be cancelled due to the increased risk of infection.

DURING YOUR HOSPITAL STAY

How long does the surgery take?

Your procedure will take approximately one hour to complete. Surgery time may be longer if you are a “revision” procedure. You will go to the recovery room for another hour or so before being transferred to your hospital room.

How long will I be in the hospital?

Many patients are choosing to go home the same day as surgery, but some will stay 1-2 nights.

Leg Length Discrepancy: HIP ONLY

We make special effort to avoid leg length discrepancies during surgery. After surgery, it is often perceived by the patient that one leg is short or longer than the other. This perception is often caused by muscle weakness. We ask that you be patient during this time. A full evaluation of leg length variances cannot be made until after the 12 week postoperative interval. Usually the variance is minimal, if any, and can be alleviated by a simple heel pad.

AFTER YOUR SURGERY

Will I need to go to a rehab facility after surgery?

We like all our patients to be able to return home safely after surgery. If you do not have someone that can stay with you and assist with your basic needs after surgery, it is recommended that you go to a rehab facility for a short period of time.

What rehab facilities do you recommend?

All arrangements for postoperative rehab will be made by case managers (discharge planners).. The most often used facilities in Rockford are East Bank (815-633-6810) or Wesley Willows (815-316-1500). You may call them to pre-register and arrange a preoperative tour if you are interested.

Will I need therapy after surgery?

You will be visited by a therapist while in the hospital. They will help you get on your feet again following surgery and assist you in meeting goals to get you back home. If you go to a rehab facility, you will have daily therapy sessions. If you go home after surgery, we will arrange therapy as needed.

Will I have weight-bearing restrictions after surgery?

Most patients are “weight-bearing as tolerated” after surgery. For a small percentage of patients, it is possible that the doctor may restrict your ability to fully weight-bear on your extremity for a period of time after surgery. This will allow for better healing.

Will I have motion restrictions after surgery? HIP ONLY

Some total hip patients have motion restrictions for the first 6 weeks after surgery. The therapist will review these with you after surgery. Generally, these restrictions are lifted and you can slowly increase activity as tolerated after that time. Rarely, these restrictions or precautions may last a lifetime and a therapist will help you learn how you can safely participate in your activities of daily living.

When will I have my staples removed?

Most often, a surgical closure is accomplished without the use of staples. But if they are needed, your staples will be removed approximately 14-17 days after surgery. This can be done at your postoperative appointment.

When can I drive?

You are allowed to drive approximately 2-4 weeks after surgery if you feel safe. You should not be under the influence of narcotic pain medications while driving. We recommend you only drive very short distances at first, and then gradually increase. If you are planning on taking a longer car ride, you should get out of the car, stretch, and walk around for a few minutes every 60-90 minutes to prevent blood clots.

When do I resume taking medications that were stopped prior to surgery?

You may resume taking your preoperative vitamins, supplements, and other medications that were stopped prior to surgery shortly after surgery. You will be given instructions while in the hospital.

When can I shower?

If you have an intact waterproof surgical dressing, you can shower the day after surgery. If not, we ask you sponge bathe only until after your first post-operative visit. We do not want you to submerge in a tub or pool until approximately four weeks after surgery.

Will I need an antibiotic before having dental procedures and other invasive procedures done?

We ask that you have all necessary dental work done prior to undergoing surgery. After surgery, we advise you to wait three months for any routine procedures. It is recommended that you take a pre-procedure antibiotic for any dental or other invasive procedure for a **lifetime**. We will provide a note for you to give to your dentist after the surgery.

If I am going to have the other knee replaced, how long do I wait between procedures?

We recommend that you wait approximately three months between procedures.

What medications are prescribed postoperatively?

We will prescribe pain medication for you to use as needed after surgery. We also prescribe a short course (4 weeks) of Aspirin, 325 mg, two times daily after surgery to prevent thrombosis (blood clots). We will monitor the use of these medications to keep you comfortable and safe after surgery. **Pain medication refills** will be issued from our office Monday-Friday between 8 a.m. and 3 p.m. only. No prescription refills will be issued on the weekends.

Can I use a recliner chair after surgery?

We **do not** recommend the use of recliner chairs after surgery. They do not allow for proper elevation of the affected extremity. Proper elevation is essential to alleviate swelling after surgery. We recommend the use of a firm, high chair that will not break your hip precautions.

How long do I have to wear the TED hose?

We advise you to wear the compression stockings for the first 2 weeks after surgery. You may apply them in the morning and remove them before bed. They should be washed often with gentle soap and water and hung to dry. After 2 weeks, you may be asked to continue them if you have a lot of swelling or you may be able to remove them for periods of time. We will advise you at your post-operative appointment.

What can I do to alleviate swelling in the lower extremity?

The best way to prevent swelling in the affected extremity is to elevate your legs several times daily. We recommend you lie flat on a bed or sofa with your legs supported under the ankles with 2 pillows. Your legs should be higher than your heart level. Mild swelling is normal and may be noticeable for a few months after surgery. You will be amazed how much better your outcome if you take the time to properly elevate!!

When can I sleep on my operative side?

You can sleep on your operative side when you feel comfortable. You will want to place a pillow between your legs to remind you of your hip restrictions if this applies to your surgery.

Can I use a heating pad or ice pack after surgery?

We prefer ice packs. In the first 6 weeks after surgery, heat is not recommended. Both can be harmful if placed in direct contact with the skin, so use a barrier. In general, apply ice for 20 minutes every hour as needed. Never sleep with a heating pad.

How much exercise can I do and when have I done too much?

Avoid over-activity! Mild activity and exercise is beneficial. Too much exercise will result in pain and swelling in the leg.