

Hip Joint Replacement FAQ's



1809 E. 13th Street, Suite 100
Tulsa, OK 74104
Phone 918-582-6800
Fax 918-582-6060

What is arthritis and why does my hip hurt?

The hip joint is lined with a layer of smooth cartilage, which allows the hip ball to move smoothly in a cup. Arthritis is the wearing down of that smooth cartilage resulting in pain, swelling and stiffness to the area affected.

What does a total hip replacement involve?

A total hip replacement involves the following: the arthritic ball of the thigh bone, or femur, is removed and replaced with a metal ball that is fixed solidly inside of the femur by a shaft attached to the ball. The hip socket is replaced with a plastic or metal liner that is fixed inside of a metal cup. The new parts move freely and smoothly against each other.

Am I too old for this type of surgery?

As long as you are in reasonable health and have the desire to devote time and effort into the rehabilitation process, you are a candidate for this type of surgery.

What is Computer Assisted Surgery?

The use of computer navigation in surgery has revolutionized the total joint replacement procedure. With the utilization of computer navigation, artificial joint components are accurately placed, which allows incredible precision in overall limb alignment and a promise of increased longevity of the joint replacement. Joint replacement surgeries using computer navigation have significantly smaller incisions which also reduces the amount of operative trauma for patients.

Should I exercise prior to surgery?

Yes, your surgeon will give you recommended exercises and you will also be taught specific exercises by a physical therapist at your pre-operative education class. It is important to build up the muscle groups prior to surgery as you will have soreness and stiffness after surgery that will require more effort for you to get up and around.

What are the major risks with a hip replacement?

Infection and blood clots are two serious complications with any surgery. To avoid these complications, we use antibiotics and blood thinners. There are special precautions taken during surgery to reduce the risk of infections.

How long does the surgery take?

Total operating time from skin incision to closure is about an hour and a half. The time elapsed from entering the operating room to exiting into the recovery area is approximately two to two-and-a-half hours. This time includes anesthetic induction, positioning and surgical site preparation; it is not all operating time.

How painful is hip replacement?

You will have discomfort after your surgery. The initial 8 to 10 hours out of recovery prove to be the most painful. The staff is specifically trained for post-operative pain management. Your RN will work closely with you to insure that you are as comfortable as possible.

It is important to keep in mind that extended use of IV narcotics has proven to slow the body's ability to stabilize blood pressure, pulse, and fluid volumes. Narcotic medications slow digestion, which increases risk of nausea and poor appetite. Narcotic medications also decrease your ability to participate and make decisions in your care. We often find that many patients experience fewer complications and mobilize much safer with the use of oral pain medication. There are non-medicinal approaches to pain relief that are also very effective in the total hip replacement patient.

How long will my new hip last?

A number of factors will affect the longevity of your hip replacement. Thus, there is no guarantee for a specific length of time for your implant to last. Factors that are under the control of the patient that can affect the longevity of a new hip joint include

Hip Joint Replacement FAQ's



1809 E. 13th Street, Suite 100
Tulsa, OK 74104
Phone 918-582-6800
Fax 918-582-6060

weight, activity level, and medical condition stability. Statistically, loosening or wear rates requiring repeat surgery are about 1 percent per year. In other words, about 90+ percent of replacements will last 10 years or longer.

What causes loosening of a new hip implant?

The most common cause of repair for a hip implant is loosening of the artificial surface from the bone. Your surgeon will explain this and other possible complications.

Will I have a scar?

You will have a scar from your surgical incision. The length of the incision varies; however, the average is four to six inches in length.

What can I expect after my total hip replacement?

No two patients experience the same recovery or results after hip replacement surgery. The most important component of hip replacement surgery is rehabilitation after the procedure, consisting primarily of exercises to decrease stiffness and soreness.

How long will I be in bed after surgery?

You will be assisted with standing the evening of your surgery. We have found that the quicker patients get back up on their feet, the quicker the body's hemo dynamics (appropriate balance in blood pressure, pulse, hemoglobin level and fluid volume) stabilize. Your first few times out of bed will require the assistance of one or two staff members. We will assist you up from bed for breakfast the morning after your surgery.

Meals are served at tables – not in bed. Also, bedpans are not used, so you will be assisted up and out of bed to a bedside commode as needed. Please keep in mind that our staff is specifically trained to help patients with new joint implants get out of bed safely. Listen to the staff and use their tips.

How long will I be in the hospital?

The average number of days in the hospital for joint replacement surgery is two to three; however, with the development of the total joint replacement program, shorter hospital stays are becoming more common.

Will I need help at home?

You will need some assistance and supervision with activities of daily living for a short amount of time. This amount of time varies with each patient. Some surgeries require a daily dressing change to your incision, which you will probably need help with. You should not need someone with you full time at home.

Your occupational therapist will teach you how to handle daily activities prior to discharge. Preparing things before your surgery can reduce the amount of assistance you need after surgery. Having the laundry done, house cleaned, several meals prepared ahead of time, and clean linens on your bed will benefit you once you return home.

What if I live alone?

Most joint replacement patients can return home with only a few modifications to their home and a few hours of assistance daily from a family member or friend. As the days pass, you will become more confident with your ability to handle things again and your need for assistance will taper off. After the stitches or staples are removed from your incision, a dressing will no longer be needed.

Will I need physical therapy at home?

Total joint replacement requires consistent exercise and stretching to loosen tight ligaments and prohibit stiffness and swelling. Your surgeon or therapist will discuss the frequency and duration of your home health and outpatient physical therapy.

It is very common to have a home health therapist three times a week for three weeks, followed by outpatient physical therapy for another month after surgery. Unless your health insurance company

Hip Joint Replacement FAQ's



1809 E. 13th Street, Suite 100
Tulsa, OK 74104
Phone 918-582-6800
Fax 918-582-6060

specifies where you need to go, several therapy providers are available. You will need to have transportation arrangements made for outpatient therapy sessions.

Will I have to use a walker after my surgery?

You will need a walker or some form of assistive device for stability when you walk after surgery. At your follow up appointments, your surgeon will evaluate how long you will need to use a walker or crutches after your surgery. Do not discontinue the use of your walker or crutches without checking with your surgeon.

How soon will I see the surgeon after discharge?

You will have an office appointment scheduled for you before you are discharged. Your first appointment will be within 21 days to check your incision. You will see your surgeon at intervals determined by your surgeon and depending on your progress.

Will this new hip joint feel different to me?

Often patients report that their new hip feels “normal” to them. The leg with the new hip may be slightly longer than it was before. Most patients get used to this feeling; some require use of a small lift in the shoe of the non operative leg. Patients report a range from no pain to an aching type of discomfort in the operative leg for a few months after surgery.

What restrictions will follow this surgery?

You will not be able to run, jump or perform such activities that could require “high impact” on your new joint. Injury prone sports are also restricted. No repeat lifting of 50 to 75 pounds or more. Early on you will learn to integrate Hip Precautions into your daily living. Your surgeon will advise you on which precautions are permanent.

Hip Precautions are as follows:

- No crossing of your legs
- No twisting of the operative leg toward or away from the body
- No bending at the angle greater than 90 degrees
- No twisting side to side

What activities are encouraged / permitted?

Cycling, walking, dancing, golfing, swimming, bowling and gardening are all activities that can be performed moderately without the risk of high impact force on a new hip replacement. If you wonder about further specific activities, please ask any member of the Spine & Orthopedic Care team.