

Hip Replacement Surgery

Preparation and Healing

Introduction

Congratulations. By considering hip replacement surgery, you're taking a giant step toward improving your mobility and relieving your pain. Many of our patients tell us how much better their lives are after hip replacement.

As you approach the decision to have surgery, you probably have mixed emotions. You may be nervous about the procedure and the journey ahead. That's completely normal. We also hope you're excited about the prospect of a new, more active life.

Mercy joint replacement experts have prepared this guide to help you understand what the procedure involves and what you can expect on the road to regaining your mobility.



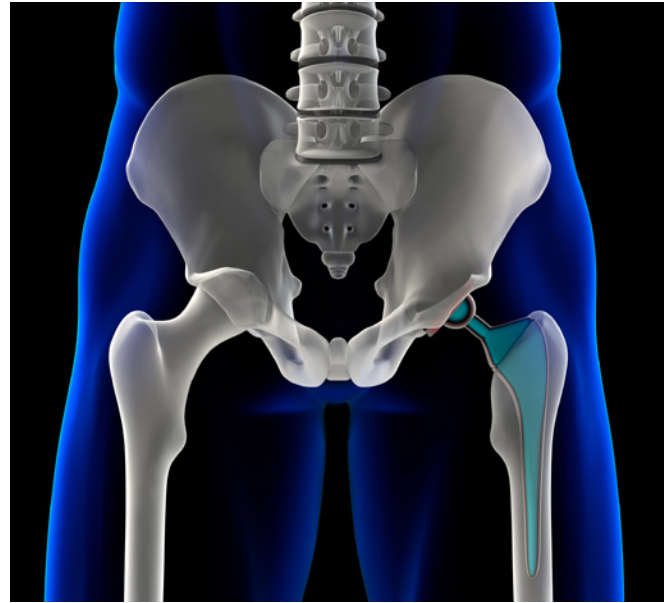
The number of Americans living with artificial hips is around 2.5 million.

The safety of our patients and caregivers has been, and always will be, our priority. We follow strict standards for disinfecting, required masking for patients, visitors and co-workers, and social distancing. Please do your part by following these and other CDC guidelines.

What is Total Hip Replacement Surgery?

Your hip is made of two basic parts that move and work together to ensure smooth motion and function. When arthritis causes the cartilage that cushions the hip to wear away, the hip joint requires replacement.

Total hip replacement surgery involves replacing the hip joint with an artificial joint made of metal, plastic or ceramic materials. The materials used in your artificial joint are very strong and are designed to last a very long time inside your body. Your orthopedic surgeon will consider many factors – such as age, bone density and the shape of your joints – to determine which type of artificial hip and which procedure are best for you.



Preparing for Surgery

Your journey to recovery begins many weeks before your actual surgery. Long-term success starts in these early stages. By following the guidelines on the next pages, you'll be well on your way to a speedy recovery. Each step listed below includes specific and detailed instructions.

Physical Exam

Before your scheduled surgery date, your specialist may order a complete medical examination by a physician. This physician will clear you for surgery by checking for any medical problems that put you at higher risk during or after a joint replacement procedure. Generally, the appointment will consist of a complete medical/family history and physical exam.

The complete medical exam should take place four weeks before your surgery date and may be scheduled together with a pre-operative class.

Pre-admission Testing

In addition to your physical exam, you will also need to undergo a series of tests to help make sure you are healthy and ready for joint replacement. Typically, these tests include X-rays, blood testing, urine testing and a test of your heart function called an electrocardiogram (EKG). Your results will be shared with your physician and orthopedic surgeon for their review. If any of the tests reveal significant risk factors, you may need to undergo additional testing.



Medications

Some medications that you currently take may prove harmful during surgery because they thin your blood and increase the risk of blood loss. If you take certain supplements or medications that contain aspirin, anti-inflammatories, blood thinners or arthritis medications, you must stop taking them seven days before your surgery.

Your care team will review your list of medications and tell you which medicines you must stop taking 7-14 days before surgery.

You will need to avoid all food and liquid after midnight on the day before surgery. There are some medications you may be told you should take the morning of your surgery, but these should be taken with as little water as possible.

Preventing Infection

There are several steps that you can take to help prevent surgical site infections. These steps start a few weeks before surgery.

- If you have not had a dental exam within the past six months, you should schedule one six weeks before your surgery. Bacteria entering the body through the mouth can cause infection, so it's important to practice good flossing and brushing habits.
- Beginning approximately two weeks before your operation, begin using an antibacterial soap when you shower. This will generally help reduce the amount of bacteria living on your skin. If you notice any skin scratches or redness prior to surgery, contact the office as soon as possible.
- The night before surgery, you should take special care to cleanse the hip that will be operated on with the special soap given to you. Your hip replacement team will give you instructions.

Consent Forms

You will be asked to sign a consent form prior to surgery to allow the surgeon to perform the required surgical procedure. Please make sure that you understand the procedure, risks and your options prior to signing the form. It is important that you completely understand the information and are an active partner in your care.

Understanding the Risks

Having a joint replaced requires major surgery. Although advances in technology and medical care have made joint replacement very safe and effective, there are risks. These risks should be considered carefully before you decide to have surgery. We encourage you to discuss the potential risks with your orthopedic surgeon, primary care physician and your family. Your orthopedic team will take every measure to minimize the risks and avoid complications.



Preparing Your Home

There are a number of tips that you and your family can follow to help make your home safe and comfortable. These include:

- Checking your home for tripping hazards.
- Storing important items within easy reach.
- Making plans for others to do strenuous tasks.
- Making adjustments so it's easy and safe for you to get around.

We encourage you to ask a family member or friend to stay with you at home until you are able to perform activities of daily living independently and safely. Typically, this occurs in the first few days after you return home.

Your Hip Replacement Surgery

The Day of Surgery

Before you leave home for the hospital, you should:

- Take any required medications as instructed with a small amount of water.
- Shower or bathe as you normally do.
- Brush your teeth and rinse with water, but do not swallow.
- Wear loose fitting, comfortable clothing that can be easily removed.
- Review your packing list to make sure you have everything you need; leave jewelry and valuables at home.
- Avoid wearing colognes, perfumes or fragrances of any kind, including deodorants, sprays, scented hand creams/lotions and shaving creams.
- Do not wear make-up or nail polish.

Anesthesia and Pain Management

While you may feel most anxious about the surgery itself, the procedure is actually one of the shortest steps in the hip replacement journey. Thanks to anesthesia, you won't even be aware of the surgery as it's happening.

It is important that you tell your anesthesiologist of any prior problems or bad experiences with anesthesia.

Your anesthesiologist will discuss the risks and benefits associated with anesthesia, as well as the potential side effects that can occur. Nausea and vomiting may be caused by the anesthesia and the procedure itself, though medications are available to treat both.



General Anesthesia

- If a general anesthetic is used, a medication will be injected into your body through the IV inserted in your arm.
- General anesthesia produces deep unconsciousness for surgery so that the brain doesn't perceive pain.

Managing Your Pain

Some degree of pain is unavoidable. Your care team's goal is to have your pain as well controlled as possible. You will receive pain medication through a nerve block and your IV after surgery and by mouth once you are recovering in the hospital. Communication is an important part of helping manage your discomfort and pain. Tell your nurses about any pain you experience. Don't wait until the pain is severe. The more severe the pain, the harder it is to control. Your physicians and nurses will do everything possible to relieve your pain and discomfort using medications and other techniques.

Surgery

Total joint replacement surgery requires your surgeon to remove the damaged ends of two bones and replace the ball and socket. In total hip replacement, your orthopedic surgeon will replace the upper part of your femur (the long bone in the thigh of your leg) with a new ball. At the same time, the hip socket in your pelvis will be lined with a new material for reinforcement. The new ball on the top of your leg will glide normally in the newly lined hip socket.

Your orthopedic surgeon may decide to attach your new joint with or without a cement substance. If your doctor uses cement, your new artificial joint will be attached to existing bone with very strong, permanent glue. If your doctor decides not to use cement, a bonding material will be used instead. This material contains thousands of tiny holes. As time goes on, your body will begin growing new bone and filling these holes. As the holes are filled, your new joint becomes permanently attached to the bone.

The total time required for your surgery will be different from patient to patient, depending on the complexity of your procedure. Generally, most joint replacement surgeries last between one and one-half to two hours, not including the preparation and recovery times.

After surgery, you will be transported to an area called the Post Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU) or recovery room. You will spend between one hour and one and one-half hours in the PACU while you thoroughly recover from the effects of anesthesia.

After a few hours in the PACU, you will be moved to your hospital room to begin your road to recovery.



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Your Hospital Stay

Immediately Following Surgery

You can expect to receive antibiotics for about a day after surgery, as well as medications for pain, and perhaps medications to prevent blood clots, called anticoagulants. Sometimes, patients will feel nauseated or constipated.

Both symptoms can be managed with medication, so it is important that you talk with your physician or nurse if you don't feel well.



The average hospital stay after joint replacement is one to three days.

After surgery, you will notice a bandage on your hip. You will also have a compression pump on the lower part of your legs. These will squeeze the leg at regular intervals to circulate blood and to help prevent clotting.

Your physician will order therapy to begin the day of surgery. Most Mercy patients are ready to sit at the edge of the bed, stand and even take a few steps the afternoon of their surgery.

First Days After Surgery

Most patients who have total hip replacement surgery are ready to start walking with assistance the day after surgery. It is likely that you will use a walker and may be able to put some weight on the joint if you can tolerate it and if approved by your physician.



It is important to participate in therapy while in the hospital and after you are discharged.

Your physical therapist will help you begin your exercise routine. These exercises are designed to help increase strength and flexibility in the joint. This rehabilitation and exercise process can be significant. Your occupational therapist will work to help you become independent with activities of daily living, like walking, climbing stairs, and getting in and out of a bed. In order to ensure maximum success, it is important that you take part in therapy, both while you are in the hospital and after you are discharged from the hospital.

Discharge and Your Follow-up Appointment

Discharge

Before you are discharged from the hospital, your navigator should help schedule your post-surgical follow-up appointment with your orthopedic clinic. These appointments are scheduled two to four weeks after your hospital discharge.

The Follow-up Appointment

In addition to checking your new joint for strength, flexibility and overall progress, your physician's nurse practitioner or physician's assistant will also provide a new set of care guidelines and a list of activities you may now begin. As always, be sure to ask any questions you have.

A care plan and additional follow-up appointments may also be established at this time.

Frequently Asked Questions

How often will I see my surgeon after surgery?

Your surgeon, physician assistant, or nurse practitioner may follow your care throughout your hospital stay. Your surgeon will also want to see you for follow-up appointments in the office after you are discharged. Typically, appointments are scheduled two to four weeks after surgery.

How do I know if my incision is infected?

After surgery, you will notice discolored skin, some swelling and drainage around your incision. This is normal. If you experience painful redness, abnormal swelling, or thick, bad smelling drainage from your incision, you may have an infection. A temperature over 101°F also may indicate an infection.

When can I take a shower or bath?

Most patients will shower on the second day after surgery while still in the hospital. When you return home, you may need special equipment, like a bath mat, hand-held showerhead or shower seat to help you bathe comfortably and safely. Your surgeon may also instruct you to cover your incision when you bathe.



When will I be able to drive again?

You should not drive a car or other motor vehicle until your physician says it's okay to do so. You must be off pain medications before you will be cleared to drive again. In most cases, patients are able to resume driving about four weeks after surgery.

Why must I take antibiotics for dental work or other surgical procedures?

Taking antibiotics is a precaution to help ensure that your new artificial joint does not become infected. Additional surgeries or dental work increase the chance of infection. No matter where the infection starts, if it spreads to your new hip, the results could be very serious. When artificial joints become infected, they must be removed surgically and then replaced. Please let your dentist or physician know that you've had joint replacement surgery. This is important no matter how small or straightforward the procedure.

How should I sleep at night to keep my hip comfortable and safe?

Placing a pillow between your legs should help keep your hip comfortable and stable. You may sleep on your back or on either side, depending on what makes you most comfortable.

Let Mercy Help You Get Back to Living Fully

The team of specialists at Mercy provide care for everything from achy joints to sports injuries to total joint replacement.

With more than 150 orthopedic specialists, we are dedicated to providing specialized and individual care to our patients. We offer orthopedic surgery as well as non-surgical services to treat illnesses or injuries affecting bones, muscles, ligaments, joints and tendons. Find an [orthopedic clinic](#) near you.

Our mission at Mercy is to create the best care plan for you and help you achieve your goal of living a healthy, mobile life.