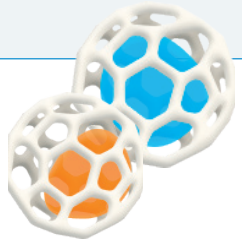
Getting Ready for Joint Replacement

A joint replacement can relieve pain and help you live a fuller, more active life.

Once you and your doctor have decided that joint replacement surgery is right for you, you will need several weeks to prepare, both physically and emotionally.

By planning ahead, you can help ensure a smooth surgery and speedy recovery.



How will I know what to expect?

Talk to your doctor. Never hesitate to ask questions when you do not understand. The more you know, the better you will be able to manage the changes that joint replacement surgery will make in your life.

Pre-admission tests. Several weeks before surgery, your primary care doctor will check your general health.

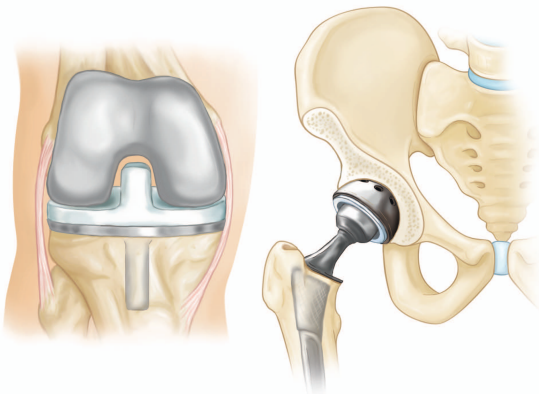
If you have had any problems with anesthesia in the past, be sure to tell your doctor.

Your doctor may also require blood tests, a cardiogram, and x-rays.

Discuss your hospital stay. Ask your doctor how long you will be in the hospital, and how long your recovery will take. Will you need physical therapy? Ask whether you will need to stay in an extended care facility after leaving the hospital.

Ask more questions. It's common to forget some things we want to talk about with our doctors. The best thing to do is make a list, such as this one.

- What are typical outcomes and complications of this surgery?
- How much pain will there be, and how will it be managed in the hospital and at home?
- How will my activity level change after my joint replacement?



Prepare ahead for your joint replacement to help ensure the best outcome possible.

How can I physically prepare for surgery?

Being physically ready for surgery can reduce your recovery time.

If you smoke, cut down or quit. Smoking delays healing and slows recovery. It can also interfere with anesthesia during surgery.

Eat right. If you are overweight, your doctor may recommend a weight loss program to lessen the stress on your new hip or knee replacement.

Exercise. If you are having a hip or knee replacement, strengthening your upper body will help you handle crutches or a walker.

Ask your doctor about postoperative exercises. If you practice them now, it will be easier to do them after surgery.

Watch your alcohol intake. Do not have any alcohol for at least 48 hours before surgery.

Discuss other types of controlled substances. Tell your doctor about any narcotics or other drug use. These can have an impact on your surgery.

How do I start getting ready?

You can take steps now to help you manage your first weeks at home.

Prepare for daily activities.

Arrange for help. After surgery, you will need some help for several weeks with such tasks as cooking, shopping, bathing, and laundry.

If you live alone, arrange for someone to bring you home and stay with you for several days after your surgery.

Another option is to hire someone to assist you at your home. If you have special needs, consider a short stay at an extended care facility right after your discharge. A social worker or discharge planner at the hospital can help you make these arrangements.

Make and freeze meals. Make meal preparation easier by freezing favorite foods or stocking up on ready-made dinners.

Prepare your home.

Assess your floor plan. Consider rearranging furniture. You may decide to temporarily change rooms – make the living room your bedroom, for example.

Remove rugs. Put away throw or area rugs that could cause you to slip or trip. Securely fasten electrical cords out of your way.

Prepare your bathroom. Make your bathroom safer and easier to use with items like a shower chair, gripping bar, or raised toilet seat.

Put things at mid-level. Whether in the kitchen, bathroom, or bedroom, keep items you use regularly somewhere between waist and shoulder height. That way, you will not need to reach up or bend down to get to them.

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Take it easy

Set up a "recovery center" where you will spend most of your time when you get home.

Choose a stable chair for your early recovery with a firm back, two arms, and a firm seat cushion that keeps your hips above your knees. Gather around it things you regularly need, like:

- Phone
- Television remote control
- Radio
- Tissues
- Reading materials
- Pitcher of water and glass
- Medications

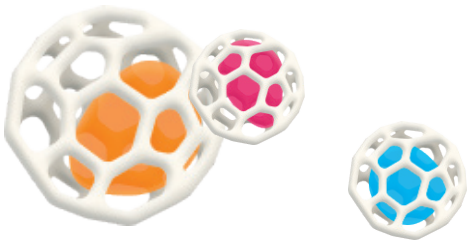
What will make my home safer?

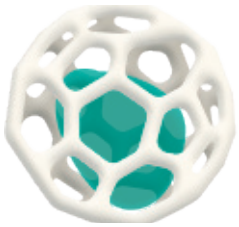
Use the following checklist to keep track of items that will help with daily activities.

- ☐ Secured safety bars or handrails in your shower or bath
- ☐ Secured handrails along all stairways
- ☐ Crutches or a walker
- ☐ A raised toilet seat
- ☐ A stable shower bench or chair for bathing

Talk to your doctor's office about where you can find these items.

- ☐ A long-handled sponge and shower hose
- ☐ A dressing stick, a sock aid, and a long-handled shoehorn to help you avoid bending over or reaching too much
- ☐ A reacher to help you grab objects
- ☐ Firm pillows for chairs or sofas to keep your knees below your hips.





For more information

For more information about getting ready for joint replacement surgery, visit *OrthoInfo* at **www.orthoinfo.org.**

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