

## Understanding Your Recovery

# Total Hip Replacement

**AS A PATIENT**, your role after hip replacement surgery is key to a speedy and successful recovery. Everyone's healing time is different; however, it usually takes between 3 and 6 months to recover from hip replacement surgery, and up to one year in some cases. Most artificial hip joints are still functioning well after 15 years.

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## Home Care

After your surgery, it is important that you follow your healthcare provider's instructions. There are simple things you can do to help your hip heal at home:



### ASSISTIVE DEVICES

Use your walker or crutches as instructed by your healthcare provider. Avoid bending at your hips while putting on socks and shoes by using a reacher, sturdy slip-on shoes, or a long-handled shoe horn. An elevated commode seat should be used to avoid excessive hip bending while using the restroom.



### HOME MODIFICATION

Simple changes to your home environment can make your recovery easier. Place frequently used items on counter tops within easy reach. Your provider may recommend that you install grab bars in your shower or use a shower bench to make transfers safe and easy.

Prevent falls by removing hazards like throw rugs and electrical cords to help increase your safety. Use a firm chair with armrests that allows your knees to stay lower than your hips when you sit in it and allows you to use your arms when transferring.



### LIFESTYLE CHANGES

Contact your provider before you start driving again. Avoid driving until you have enough hip motion and strength to sit comfortably, get in and out of the car safely, and operate the gas pedal.

Speak with your provider about when it is safe to resume sexual activity. In general, avoid positions with excessive hip bending and twisting until your hip precautions are lifted.



### PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Continue your physical therapy exercises to increase your strength, balance, and flexibility. Gradually resume your daily activities around your home as soon as you can. Start with walking around your home, then progress to walking longer distances outside on level surfaces.

## Precautions

After a total hip replacement, there are some positions your provider may recommend you avoid during your recovery. It is important to follow these precautions and any other instructions your provider gives you regarding your new hip to protect it and allow it to heal properly.

## Pain Control

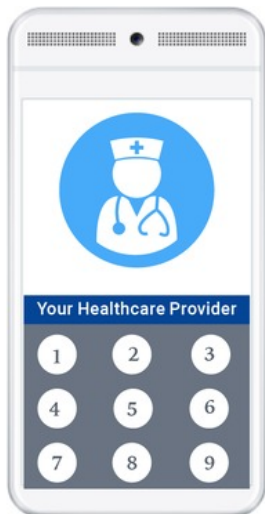
It is normal to have pain in your hip following surgery. Here are some quick tips to help reduce your hip pain:

- ▶ Use your pain medication as directed and contact your prescriber with questions.
- ▶ Elevate your entire leg on a pillow or blankets in bed for 1-2 hours each day.
- ▶ Use ice on your hip for 15-20 minutes at a time, up to once every two hours.
- ▶ Increase activities gradually as instructed by your healthcare provider.

## Wound Care

You will have stitches, staples, or glue in the skin around your incision for up to 14 days after surgery. It is important to keep a clean, dry dressing on your incision until the staples are removed. Change the dressing if it becomes wet or dirty. Always clean your hands with warm, soapy water before touching your wound.

If your wound is draining (leaking) and your dressings are soaked, let your surgeon know. There should be no new drainage from your incision starting 3 to 4 days after surgery. Check with your surgeon about bathing or showering after your surgery.



### Contact Your Healthcare Provider if You Experience:

- Redness, pain, swelling, or tenderness in your hip
- Excessive blood soaking through your dressing, or the bleeding does not stop when pressure is applied
- Pain that worsens over time or does not go away with pain medicine
- Fluid draining from your incision
- Your temperature is over 100 degrees Fahrenheit

### Go to the **Emergency Room** if You Experience:

- Chest pain, uncontrolled coughing, or shortness of breath
- Severe hip pain which prevents you from putting any weight on your operated leg (after you previously have been able to do so)

## Activity and Movement



**Begin walking as soon as you are able to**



**You will be given an exercise program to do every day**



**Using a reacher can make daily activities easier**

Walking is one of the best exercises you can do for your new joint. Start with walking around your home, then gradually progress to walking longer distances on level surfaces. Your healthcare provider will tell you if you need to limit how much weight you can put on your new joint. You may be instructed to use a walker or cane. It is important to follow these and other safety instructions after surgery, such as using a handrail when you go up and down steps.

Stretching and strengthening exercises are some of the best ways to get the most movement and function out of your total joint surgery. Your therapy team will teach you ways of staying safe and making daily life easier. You may be advised to use a shoe horn or a reacher to reach objects on the floor or high in the cupboards. Do not bend down to pick things up.

Taking your medications as prescribed can make it easier for you to complete your exercises, participate in therapy, and return to your daily activities.

# Pain Management



**Take your pain medications as prescribed**



**Elevate your whole leg to help reduce pain**

It is normal to have pain following your total joint surgery. This pain should gradually decrease as you heal, and there are steps you can take to ease the pain during your recovery. Your doctor may prescribe pain medications, and it is important to take these as prescribed. Pain medication can help you engage fully in exercise or therapy, especially if taken before participating.

Swelling can be a cause of pain in the healing joint. Elevate your leg, including your foot, by propping it up on pillows or blankets. Be sure to raise your leg above your heart to help reduce swelling.

Applying an ice pack to your new knee or hip for 10-20 minutes, every hour or two as needed can also ease pain. Be sure to place a towel or pillowcase between your skin and the ice pack to protect your skin.

Although you may be excited to use your new joint, you also need to take breaks in the beginning as you heal. If you increase your walking or other activities, give yourself an extra rest break to let your body recover.