

Questions To Ask Your Orthopedic Surgeon

The goal of Orthopedic treatment is to relieve pain and restore function. In planning your treatment, your doctor will consider many things, including your age, activity level, and general health. If nonsurgical treatment methods, such as medication and physical therapy, do not relieve your symptoms, your doctor may recommend joint replacement.

Your doctor and health team will provide you with information to help you prepare for surgery. Never hesitate to ask questions. The following list of questions can help you in your discussions with your doctor before your surgery.

What are the major and/or most frequent complications of surgery?

Can you give me any information on outcomes and complication rates?

What will I be able to do/not do after my joint replacement surgery?

How much pain can I expect, and how will it be managed in the hospital as well as after I go home?

Is therapy necessary after surgery?

How long will I be in the hospital?

Will I be able to contact you after the surgery if I have a question or problem?

If I do not have surgery, what is the risk?

Is the skill and experience of the Orthopedic surgeon more important than the device or procedure?

How long will the device last, and what can I do to make it last as long as possible?

What are the pros and cons of minimally invasive surgery? Does it really make a meaningful difference in the result, or does it pose unnecessary risks?



Preparing for Your Surgery

Getting physically and psychologically ready for joint replacement surgery can be an intense process. Those who are better prepared tend to achieve better results. Here are some tips for achieving optimal results:

Find an experienced Orthopedic surgeon: Your Orthopedic surgeon will become an important person in your life for years to come. Make sure you are comfortable with your doctor's approach, level of experience, and personality.

Educate yourself about your surgery: Learn as much as possible about pre-surgery preparations, the procedure, post-surgery care, precautions as well as possible complications. Ask your doctor to review your care plan in detail.

Get a second opinion: Your Orthopedic surgeon should honor your right to confer with another, well-respected Orthopedist if you have any doubts.

Plan ahead: Schedule surgery when you can afford to take time off from work, and when it will be least disruptive to your family.

Weigh risks versus benefits: Reconcile the big picture in your mind so you don't go into surgery dwelling on risks or potential complications.

Have a positive attitude: Be encouraged and focus on the high rate of success for total joint procedures.

Talk with past patients: Hearing about other's successes can help you gain perspective and ease your mind.

Visualize getting your life back: The pain and deterioration of your joint severely diminished your quality of life. Think about how much things – and life – will improve after surgery.



Plan for Your Homecoming

Joint replacement surgery recovery will take several weeks. There are steps you can take now to make your time at home more comfortable and safer:

- Place items that you use frequently within easy reach.
- Borrow a pair of crutches or walker to see how well you can maneuver through your home.
- Consider rearranging furniture or temporarily change rooms, such as making the living room your bedroom.
- Remove any area or throw rugs that could cause you to slip and securely fasten electrical cords around the perimeter of the room.
- Consider modifying your bathroom to include a shower chair, gripping bar, or raised toilet seat.
- Shop for things that will make your life easier after your surgery. Helpful items include a big-pocket shirt or soft shoulder bag for carrying things around; a footstool; a grabbing tool; a long-handled shoehorn; a long-handled sponge.
- Place items you use frequently – such as facial tissue, a phone, remote control, medication, reading materials, or wastebasket – within easy reach so that you do not have to reach up or bend down.
- If you do not already have a disabled parking permit, apply for a temporary permit several weeks before your surgery. Contact the Department of Motor Vehicles, or check with your doctor's office to see if they have an application form.

