

POSTOPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS FOR TOTAL HIP AND TOTAL KNEE PATIENTS

The following are guidelines that you should find helpful in the weeks following your total hip replacement or total knee replacement surgery.

1. Dentist – Avoid elective dental appointments in the first six weeks following your surgery. Try to complete elective dental work preoperatively.
2. Antiembolism socks – Wear the socks on both legs for the first two weeks. Use the sock on the surgical leg for four weeks following your surgery, especially at night. This is when blood is pooling your extremities.
3. Showering – You may shower directly over the wound when you return home following discharge from the hospital. When your sutures are removed two weeks following the surgery, Steri-Strips maybe applied over the wound. You may shower directly over the Steri-Strips. Pat dry with a towel. The Steri-Strips most likely will come loose and maybe removed within a week of application.
4. Driving – You should not drive while taking narcotic pain pills during the day. If your right leg is the surgical leg, you will not have normal reflex time to reach the break in an emergency for four weeks following the surgery.
5. Elimination/bowels - Docusate sodium (stool softener), 100 mg tablets, should be taken twice a day while on narcotics, as the narcotics tend to cause constipation. A Fleet enema maybe necessary if you have no bowel movement for three days consecutively.
6. Physical therapy – We prescribe outpatient physical therapy three times a week for two to three weeks following discharge from the hospital. Your therapist may recommend additional supervised visits which we will approve on their recommendation. Once your formal physical therapy visits are completed, you are still expected to continue with home exercises for four months following the surgery to gain maximum recovery.
7. Total knee motion goals – Our goal in flexion is for 120 degrees of flexion and this will come gradually over the first two to three months following the surgery. Our goal in extension is full extension to 0 degrees within three to four weeks of the surgery. Because extension is hard to achieve beyond four weeks, we recommend use of the knee immobilizer splint at night for the first two weeks to maintain full extension. Your motion will be assessed at the first postoperative appointment to make sure you are making good progress.
8. Airline/flying – Avoid elective airline travel for the first six weeks following surgery because of the increased risk of blood clot formation at altitude. That risk returns to baseline at six weeks following the surgery.
9. Anticoagulation – You will receive Lovenox injections while in the hospital and for a total of seven to ten days following the surgery. Anti-inflammatory medications should be avoided until the Lovenox is completed.

10. Bending – Avoid the temptation in total knee replacements to sit with the knee in the position of comfort. We want you to work on full extension and full flexion and these exercises should be done frequently during the day.
11. Icing – For total knee replacements, ice a minimum of 20-25 minutes four times per day. This is important in the first six weeks, but maybe continued longer if necessary.
12. Clinic visits – We routinely see you at two weeks following the surgery for suture removal and postoperative rehabilitation instructions. Our next routine visit is at four months following surgery. You are welcome to return at any time if you have concerns or questions.
13. Total hip replacements – Avoid flexion beyond 90 degrees and internal rotation, as well as extension and external rotation. This is especially important in the first six weeks. Keep your knees apart when bending forward. For kneeling, “up with the good first—down with the bad first.”
14. The Narcotic pain medication that is often given after surgery is not a “phone in” type of prescription. When a refill is needed for this type of medication some one will have to come to our clinic to pick up a hand written prescription. Please be sure to call to request a refill before you are down to your last pain pill. Once the prescription is ready you will be notified that it can be picked up.