

SHOULDER REPLACEMENT SURGERY

Introduction

The following information is provided to help you progress smoothly through your shoulder replacement operation. Use this handout along with the pre-operative instruction sheet that will help you schedule your surgery, doctor visits, and physical therapy.

Before surgery

You are required to undergo a general medical evaluation prior to surgery. If you have any serious pre-existing medical condition(s), you may need to see your doctor(s) before going ahead with surgery.

As well, it is preferred that you meet with your physical therapist prior to your surgery. They will provide you with simple instructions for after surgery, as well as arrange your post-operative therapy sessions.

In addition, you should consider your living situation after surgery. For those patients who live alone and may need assistance, you may wish to go to a transitional care unit (TCU) for one to several weeks following surgery. Others who have family or friends that can provide assistance, you may prefer to go directly home with their help. Occasionally, in home assistance (i.e. home health nurse visits) can be arranged. These services will be coordinated by the social worker assigned to you during your hospital stay.

Anesthesia

You will meet the anesthesiologist on the day of your surgery. The specifics of the anesthesia used for your surgery will be discussed with you at that time. Typically, the operation is performed under a regional anesthetic (nerve block) that will numb the shoulder region. The anesthesiologist will also provide medication to make you comfortable during the procedure. The nerve block also provides pain relief after the procedure.

Surgery

Your shoulder replacement is performed through an incision in the front of your shoulder (approximately 5 inches in length). The surgery takes approximately 2 to 3 hours to complete. During the procedure, the arthritic joint is replaced by a metal ball and plastic socket. Some degree of blood loss is expected during the surgery. However, most patients do not require blood transfusion after surgery, and we do not ask that you donate blood prior to surgery.

Complications are **unusual** with shoulder replacement surgery, but can and occasionally do occur. Potential complications include bleeding, infection, side effects or complications from anesthesia, nerve injury, instability of the prosthesis, loosening of the implants, or stiffness.

After surgery

Most patients remain in the hospital 1 to 3 nights following the surgery. The length of your stay is determined by your general condition, pain level, tolerance of physical therapy, and your home going arrangements. Your therapy will begin the day following surgery and is important for you to begin the full recovery process. Your arm will remain in a sling when not doing your therapy and is important for your protection. The sling should be worn for 6 weeks following surgery.

You will be provided a discharge instruction sheet when you schedule your surgery. This will give you specific information regarding the care of your incisions, the use of pain medication, the use and care of your sling. Please refer to that sheet after your surgery.

Your physical therapy continues as an outpatient when you leave the hospital. This should be arranged to start 1-2 days after you leave the hospital. If you decide to stay at a TCU following surgery, you will do your therapy there. Occasionally, your insurance will approve in home physical therapy. However, you should not expect this to happen, and therefore it is expected that you will have your therapy arranged as an outpatient following surgery in all cases. It is easier to cancel scheduled visits than to try and arrange them last minute.

You will be given a therapy referral form on the day you leave the hospital. Please give this to your therapist at your first visit after surgery. It provides the therapist with specific instructions on rehabilitating your shoulder. Typically, you attend physical therapy sessions 1-2 days per week for 6-12 weeks following surgery. This is adjusted according to your progress, and will be decided by you, the surgeon, and the therapist.

You will return to see the surgeon at 10 to 14 days, 6 weeks, 3 months, 6 months, and one year following surgery. The purpose of these visits is to monitor your progress, and ensure that you are making the smoothest and best possible recovery. It is important that you schedule and maintain these regular visits.

Activity

While wearing your sling, you will be allowed to perform certain table-top and hygiene activities once you are comfortable. However, you are not to elevate or initiate movement with your shoulder without assistance until cleared by your surgeon and therapist. People who have sedentary-type jobs (desk or computer work) are usually able to return in 2-3 weeks. Those who perform manual labor or jobs that involve heavier use of the shoulder will be required to switch to “light duty”, or avoid work altogether for anywhere from 4 weeks to 3 months. (Note: these times are estimates; you may recover at a slower or faster rate.)

Discomfort is not unusual as you recover after surgery. In many instances, this persists to some degree for 3-4 months following surgery. Any problems that continue beyond that point will be investigated accordingly.

Total recovery time following surgery is variable and depends on many factors. Most people return to full, unrestricted use of the shoulder in 3-6 months after surgery. However, this depends greatly on the type of activity. Lighter activities recover more quickly; more strenuous activities take longer to return.

In general, high stress activities such as heavy hammering, heavy weight training, jackhammering, and throwing are not recommended after shoulder replacement. Lighter activities, such as swimming, golf, hunting, and fishing are not restricted.

The use of antibiotics prior to dental and other invasive procedures (i.e. colonoscopy) is recommended to prevent infection from developing.

Questions

If you have any questions either before or after your surgery, do not hesitate to contact Dr. Lervick's office at **952-456-7111**.