

AUSTIN BONE & JOINT CLINIC

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ) ABOUT JOINT REPLACEMENT

IMPORTANT - PLEASE READ.

1. How long will the surgery take?

The surgery takes approximately an hour and a half. After surgery, patients remain in recovery for up to 2 hours before going to their room.

2. What type of anesthesia is used?

In most cases, a general anesthesia is used. This is often supplemented with a pre op nerve block or spinal epidural to reduce post op pain. Your anesthesiologist will discuss the options with you immediately prior to your surgery.

3. Are “minimally invasive” techniques used?

The smallest possible incision is used for the surgery. Whenever possible a muscle sparing approach is used thereby reducing pain and shortening rehab. Most patients will have some degree of numbness around the incision. Most or all of this will resolve over 1-2 years, but there may always be some numbness.

4. What are the possible complications of the surgery?

The two complications we worry most about are *infection* and *blood clots*. We do many things to try to reduce the risk of these complications. For example, you will receive IV antibiotics for the first 24 hours of your hospital stay in an effort to prevent infection. Several precautions are taken to reduce the incidence of blood clots. While in the hospital, pneumatic compression devices are placed at the feet and/or legs to prevent blood pooling. Blood thinners such as aspirin, lovenox, etc will be started in the hospital. Therapists will get you up and moving the day after surgery stimulating circulation. Some of the surgeons require that you wear support stockings for 4-6 weeks after surgery. In spite of all that is done to reduce complication, they can not be completely eliminated. Fortunately, our complication rate is very low.

5. How long will I be in the hospital?

The typical length of stay for joint replacement is 2-4 days, not counting the day of surgery.

6. When will I be able to put any weight on my leg and/or walk?

For a knee replacement, you may put as much weight on your operative leg as feels comfortable, as soon as the next day after surgery. For a hip replacement, the amount of weight allowed varies with the surgeon's preference. You will receive instructions from your therapist as ordered by your surgeon. No matter what the weight bearing status, most patients use a walker for at least 3 weeks post op for balance, safety and comfort.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ) ABOUT JOINT REPLACEMENT (CONT)

7. What kind of rehab is involved after surgery?

You will receive physical therapy twice a day while in the hospital. You will then be discharged home from the hospital and receive home health physical therapy for 2-6 weeks. After home physical therapy, continued therapy on an out patient basis might be required, depending on your progress. For those patients that have any medical complications or have other serious medical illnesses that require close monitoring, inpatient rehab may be an option.

8. How long before I can drive?

You have to be off all narcotic pain medications before you can drive. Also, you need to have your strength and reflexes back before attempting to drive. For surgery on the right leg, this is usually 6 weeks. For the left leg, driving might be allowed sooner than this.

9. How long before I am back to my usual activities?

This is difficult to say because everyone is so different in their recovery time, response to pain, and response to rehab. But most people are back to activities in 2-3 month after surgery. For knee patients, you will have some degree of soreness and swelling for at least 6 months. Typically, rehab from knee replacement is more difficult and lengthy than that of hip replacement.

10. How can I expect to feel right after surgery?

Most patients experience low energy, decreased appetite, difficulty sleeping and decreased stamina for a few weeks after surgery. Some patients feel depressed as well because of the effects of the pain meds and decreased mobility. Most patients require narcotic pain meds for a couple of months after surgery to help with the discomfort. You should know all these feelings are normal and to be expected after a major surgery.

11. What equipment will I need after surgery?

You will need a walker and possibly an elevated commode seat. For knee patients, you will also have a continuous passive motion (CPM) machine that you will use in the hospital and also take home with you. Between our office and the case manager at the hospital, we will order any needed equipment for you.

12. When do I follow up with the doctor?

You will come back to the office 1-3 weeks after your surgery for an x-ray and incision check. After being released from the hospital, call the office within a day or two after discharge to schedule an appointment.

13. Will my prosthesis set off alarms at the airport?

It might. A card or letter from your doctor in regards to this will not do you any good. There is no way for security personal to validate its authenticity. If the alarm sound, tell the officer that you have had a joint replacement. A wand check and pat down will be done to verify your statement. You will then be allowed to pass.