

SAFETY AND YOUR TOTAL JOINT REPLACEMENT SURGERY EXPERIENCE

Replacing the worn out joint has become integral to our lives as we age. So much so, that meeting people with not just one but two, three and four artificial joints has become commonplace. Who would have known that? These people look and walk so normally. In fact nothing about their behavior would suggest that they had an artificial joint(s).

Joint replacement surgery has progressed so much and has advanced so far that today we consider total joint replacement surgery one of the safest procedures being performed in the history of medicine. Several factors contribute to this fact.

First, this is elective surgery. It is not performed in an emergent fashion generally speaking (although there are indications for this). So you, the patient, have a chance to prepare for the procedure physically, psychologically and logistically. Elective total joint replacement helps you arrange a suitable day for your surgery and plan your rehabilitation, even if it is to a short stay rehab center after surgery.

Your home should be prepared for the initial return from the hospital. Remove loose mats, throw rugs etc. and make way for easy access around the house, bedroom, toilet, shower, closets and drawers, dining room, easy chair and so on. A place inside the house to do simple exercises facilitates your rehabilitation. Physical therapists will visit you at home to guide you through your initial rehabilitation until you can visit a therapy office location where more aggressive therapy can be instituted.

Before surgery, your regular physician, primary care doctor, will evaluate you and “clear” you to undergo the procedure. Your internist or family physician may check your blood sugar levels and ensure that diabetics have adequate control of their blood sugar levels before surgery. This is important for proper healing and recovery. You may also require evaluation by a cardiologist to insure there are no cardiac related issues which might create a risk in undergoing the surgical procedure. A visit to your dentist is also highly recommended so that loose teeth, carious or infected teeth and gums may be addressed. All this planning is what helps ensure a good outcome.

Following surgery, I will see you in the office for routine checks to insure that the surgical site is healing and the functional use of your joint(s) are progressing. These visits may be every few weeks initially and taper off to annually or longer. Our team approach - working together with health care professionals and the patient - is how as an Orthopedic Surgeon, I ensure a long term good result, a joint that will function well for the rest of your life.