

Frequently Asked Questions

BEFORE SURGERY

I am scheduled for surgery, but the joint pain is getting worse. Can I get an injection?

No. Your surgeon doesn't recommend an injection in the joint within 3 months of your planned surgery.

Can I get a manicure/pedicure before/after surgery?

You may get a manicure or pedicure before or after your surgery, but you should avoid having cuticles trimmed or other services that may cause bleeding (avoid for 6 weeks after surgery). The day of surgery, a monitor that clips to your finger or toe will measure your oxygen level; nail polish, gels, and acrylics can interfere with it working properly. Each hospital and surgery center has their own guidelines regarding nail polish, gels, or acrylics. If you have questions, PLEASE ASK THE FACILITY TEAM during your pre-operative call or visit.

Can I get a vaccine before/after surgery?

Your surgeon recommends avoiding all vaccines for 2 weeks before and 2 weeks after your surgery. Your body will be working hard to heal from surgery, so it's best to avoid anything else that can stress your immune system.

I am very anxious about having surgery. Is this normal? Is there anything I can do?

Being anxious or nervous about surgery is completely normal! We hope that the information and support we're giving you in our office and in this manual will help. However, if you have a diagnosis of anxiety or depression, you may want to consult the healthcare provider who treats it to make sure that it is managed well now and through your recovery.

When will I be told what time my surgery will be and when to arrive?

You will get a phone call to tell you exactly what time your surgery is and when to arrive at the facility:

- The call will be the day before surgery, between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.
- If your surgery is on a Monday, you will get a call on Friday afternoon.

Please be sure you have given your care team your current phone number.

Please answer your phone the day before surgery for this important call.

Please have any last-minute questions written down so you don't forget to ask them when you receive this call.

What do I bring with me when I come for surgery?

You'll be asked to bring items based on your medical history, the surgery you're having, and the facility where you are going:

- **All patients:** Bring insurance card and photo ID (such as driver's license); bring Advance Directive if you have one.
- **If you have sleep apnea:** Bring your CPAP equipment per facility instructions.
- **If you are going to stay overnight in the hospital:** Bring an overnight bag with clothes, your walker, and personal items (phone, book, toothbrush/ toothpaste, etc.).

Who do I call with questions about my insurance coverage for my surgery?

The best information will come directly from your insurance company. Call the phone number listed on your insurance card for answers to questions such as:

- If your surgery has been approved (for both surgeon and the facility you are going to)
- If physical therapy and/or equipment is covered
- An estimate of what your insurance will pay and what you will owe

If you still have questions about the billing for the facility where you are having surgery, please call that facility directly. The main facility phone numbers are listed in the Maps and Directions section of this manual.

AFTER SURGERY

I have a lot of swelling and/or bruising down to my ankle. Is something wrong?

No. Some bleeding can be expected at the surgical site, causing bruising and swelling. It often gets worse in the early days after surgery. You may be bruised/swollen on the back of your leg or buttock, even if the incision is in the front. That's because gravity pulls bruising toward the back while you're sitting and toward the foot while you're upright. Your body will reabsorb this fluid over time, but if the swelling becomes significantly uncomfortable or worries you, please call our office.

Can I use cocoa butter, NEOSPORIN®, vitamin E, or other creams/lotions on my incision?

No, not for at least 6 weeks. If you want to use any of these creams/lotions, ask your surgeon's team at your 6-week post-operative visit if it is okay to do so.

When can I restart medications, herbals, or supplements that I had to stop before surgery?

After your surgery, we'll give you a list of medications your surgeon wants you to take at home. Feel free to ask about specific medications not on that list. Please do not start taking other medications, herbals, or supplements until your 2-week post-operative visit. At that time, you will most likely be allowed to resume taking them.

Can I shower?

Yes. You may shower when you go home, providing there is no active drainage from the incision. Your dressing is waterproof enough to shower if you avoid getting it completely soaked with water; cover it with plastic wrap or a plastic bag to help protect it. At your first post-operative visit, your dressing will be removed; you can now clean around the incision (but not the incision itself) with mild soap and water.

Can I bathe or swim?

No. Do not take a bath, swim, or submerge the incision in a bathtub, hot tub, pool, river, or ocean for at least 6 weeks to allow complete healing.

When can I drive?

There is little if any formal research that says when it is okay to drive safely after knee replacement. Typically:

- No one should attempt to drive before their 2-week post-operative office visit.
- After left knee replacement, wait until you have finished taking narcotic pain medication and are moving about easily. This may be around 3 – 4 weeks after surgery.
- After right knee replacement, wait 4 – 6 weeks. The muscle control and coordination needed in the right leg to drive safely usually takes this long to recover.

When can I go to the golf course or beach?

Not until after your first post-operative office visit. At that time, you should ask about walking on uneven surfaces such as grass, a golf course, or the sand at the beach. For the first 2 weeks, you can walk outside, but you should stay on hard, level surfaces such as patios, decks, or sidewalks.

When can I travel out of the area?

The main concern with traveling is sitting in a car or airplane for long periods of time, risking the formation of a blood clot in your leg. However, several studies have shown that, if certain steps are taken, it can be safe to travel fairly soon after your surgery. You'll need to wear compression stockings and do ankle pump exercises frequently. Check with your surgeon about your specific plans.

- **By car:** You should wait until your first post-operative office visit for your surgeon's final approval of your travel plans. If you are approved to travel by car, make sure to move the car seat back as far as possible to give yourself room to move and exercise your legs. Do ankle pump exercises frequently, and stop the car to take a short walk every 1 – 2 hours.
- **By plane:** You should typically wait 6 weeks after your surgery. If you need to fly sooner, talk to your surgeon before your surgery. During the flight, do ankle pump exercises frequently, and get up and walk the aisle of the airplane every 1 – 2 hours.

When I fly, will I have difficulty getting through airport security?

Your implant will likely set off security scanners. There is no card or paperwork that will change this. Plan to arrive early so you will have time to get through security. Simply explain to the security staff about your implant and be patient as they do their job.

If I need to refill my pain medication prescription who should I call?

Call our office or send a request through the Patient Portal. Please remember to contact us well before you run out. When requests are sent early in the day, we usually can renew prescriptions by the end of the business day. However, several factors including insurance rules can slow this process, so plan ahead, especially if the weekend or a holiday is coming up soon.

How long will I need to wear compression stockings?

You will likely need to wear compression stockings on both legs, 23 hours a day for the first 2 weeks until your follow-up visit in the office. Plan ahead because taking them off and putting them back on each day can be difficult as you're recovering, and you may need help doing this.

Can I go to the dentist? Will I need to take antibiotics when I go to the dentist?

Before surgery

To make sure you are well healed and there is no infection when you have your joint replacement, follow these guidelines:

- Simple cleaning or fillings: At least 3 weeks before surgery
- Single tooth pulled or single implant: At least 3 weeks before surgery
- Multiple teeth pulled or implants: At least 3 months before surgery

After surgery

- First 3 months: Avoid dental procedures if at all possible.
- 3 months to 1 year: You must take antibiotics before any dental visit.
- After the first year, antibiotics are only needed if:
 - ◊ You have a medical condition or take medications that suppress your immune system.
 - ◊ The dental work is for a tooth abscess or infection.
 - ◊ You have had joint revision (repeat) surgery.

Will I need to take iron or have a blood transfusion?

Patients having joint replacement surgery rarely require a blood transfusion. Our team will pay close attention to your hemoglobin count (a measure of how much oxygen-carrying capacity is in your blood) before surgery. If your level is not high enough, your surgery will be delayed until it can be treated medically and elevated to a level that would be considered safe for surgery.

If your surgeon thinks you would benefit from it, he or she may recommend that you take an iron supplement (such as Vitron-C®) starting a few weeks before surgery.

- You can buy Vitron-C at your local drugstore without a prescription.
- It should be taken after meals.
- It can change the color of your stools to a tarry black.
- It can often be very constipating—please use a stool softener or laxative.

How long must I wait until I can have a second/another joint replaced?

Usually it is best to wait 3 months so you are more fully recovered from the first surgery. There may be reasons to make an exception, so talk to your surgeon if you want to discuss other options.

How long should I wait to resume sexual activity after surgery?

In general, sexual activity may resume as soon as your knee is comfortable enough. Please discuss any specific questions or concerns with the care team or your physical therapist.

What could cause confusion after surgery, and is it common?

Sudden confusion after surgery is not expected, but it may happen, especially in older adults when taking pain medications (opioids). It may begin quickly or appear a few days after surgery. The confusion can be constant or may come and go. Since there can be other causes of confusion such as low sodium, low potassium, or infection, we highly recommend you, your coach, or a family member notify your surgeon immediately if you're experiencing confusion.