Getting home safely after hip replacement

Ask which movements and weight limits apply to your operation. Before the ride home, practice one transfer that matters to you, such as getting into the passenger seat of your car.

Hip replacements are among the most common and effective surgeries in joint replacement. After surgery, quality rehabilitation can help you regain your physical ability to stand, walk and start doing other activities and hobbies you love again.

What causes people to need hip replacements?

One of the most common causes of total hip replacement is osteoarthritis, also called degenerative joint disease. This occurs from wear and tear on the hip joint from either an old injury or previous infection. However, the exact cause of osteoarthritis is unknown.

Other conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis (swelling of the tissues around the joint), post-traumatic arthritis from an injury and poor blood supply to the joint can also lead to a hip replacement.

Exactly what is meant by total hip replacement?

Total hip replacement, or total hip arthroplasty, replaces damaged surfaces of the hip ball and socket with artificial components. The surgeon selects how to fix the components to the thigh bone and pelvis. Implants can last many years. Ask your surgeon how the particular implant, activity, bone health and follow-up plan affect expected durability.

What can patients expect after a hip replacement?

Following joint replacement surgery, you can expect:

- A decrease or elimination of pain
- Better joint movement
- Easier daily activities (climbing stairs, walking and getting into and out of a car)

It is possible to be out of bed and walking within a few hours after surgery. In fact, you should be—movement and walking help to reduce swelling, reduce the risk of developing blood clots and pneumonia and assist in reducing any pain around the surgical site.

What is the importance of rehabilitation after hip replacement surgery?

Rehabilitation is important to help you relearn how to use your joint, and because the hip joint has so much movement, joint replacement patients are at risk for dislocating the hip. Whether you recover in an inpatient rehab setting, nursing facility or at home, physical and occupational therapy will be essential toward recovery and relearning how to use the new joint.

Your doctor may refer you to a physical therapist who helps by evaluating your abilities and designing a treatment plan that may focus on:

- Improving range of motion in your joint
- Increasing your muscle strength
- Improving your ability to get in and out of bed as well as on and off other surfaces
- Helping you relearn to walk—if you're able to bear weight on the surgical leg as tolerated and if your physician has cleared you to do so, this may begin with crutches or a walker
- Teaching you pain management strategies and safety precautions
- Educating your loved ones on how to help you with your daily tasks as needed

An occupational therapist can help you learn the best ways to dress, bathe, perform personal hygiene and get on and off the toilet and other surfaces. Your occupational therapist can also provide education on the use of adaptive equipment to help with these tasks and ways to conserve your energy so you don't get too tired doing daily tasks.

Hip replacement can help you resume activities that you might have lost the ability to do. If surgery seems like a good option for you or loved one, talk to a physician about how a hip replacement could restore mobility.

For questions about a possible stay, call Lakeview Admissions at (262) 534-8509. During a stay, ask the bedside nurse who can help with your question.

This article is informational only and does not constitute medical advice, and is not a substitute for medical or professional care.

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