

# JOINT REPLACEMENT RECOVERY: ACTIVITY GUIDELINES

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When you arrive home after joint replacement surgery, you may feel relieved and more relaxed. This is a sure sign you are on the road to recovery. But at home, you must continue to follow the activity guidelines set for you in your discharge plan in order to further progress.

*"I do the exercises that's on the paperwork. You do those exercises and you'll find out that your pain will start easing up. And you keep doing it. Your pain will start easing up and you're good to go."*

At home, continue to do your post-surgical exercises as directed. You will probably do them for about 20 minutes, twice a day.

Gradually begin to walk more and more. Walk around your house. Start slowly, maybe just one room at a time. Then try to increase the distance and amount of time you walk.

Include stairs. Have someone nearby to support you. And if you need to rest, stop and take some deep breaths before continuing up or down the stairs.

Your healthcare provider will let you know when you are ready to stop using your crutches, walker, or cane.

Walking does not take the place of your other exercises. Make sure you attend all of your physical therapy sessions. Depending on your individual recovery plan, a physical therapist may come to your home for your therapy session, or you may attend outpatient physical therapy at a rehabilitation center. With the help of your physical therapists, set activity goals to help get you moving and build strength in your joint.

Rehabilitation and therapy are always harder to do if you are in pain. Make sure you take your pain medication before any therapy or exercise session. If you don't, you may not want to move your body as much as you need to in order to recover safely.

When you do experience pain or swelling in the joint area, apply an ice pack. This will reduce your swelling and relieve some of the pain. Don't apply ice for more than 20 minutes at a time.

Balance your activities with rest. Your body is healing from surgery and you will need to take breaks. If you do get tired while doing an activity, stop and rest. Continue the activity when you feel ready.

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Talk to your healthcare provider before doing any activities you are unsure about. If you feel you aren't progressing as quickly as you would like, talk to him about your activity level, what exercises you are doing, and review how to do them properly to get the biggest benefit.

Recovery is hard work. But the daily physical therapy and movement exercises you do will increase your strength and balance so you can get back to doing the activities you love.