

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF JOINT REPLACEMENT SURGERY

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As your recovery from joint replacement surgery continues, you will begin to feel better than you have in a long time.

"I'm amazed at how fast I have gotten energy back; at how fast I have been able to move and do things."

"I have to tell you, in four weeks' time I was feeling pretty good, but I was tired. Six weeks' time, I was a little less tired. Eight weeks, I went back to work."

"I feel great. You know, I'm not tired; I'm ready to go actually. I'm ready to do more, man. I can't wait to get up out of this house."

Although you may be anxious to do all sorts of new activities with your new joint, there are some guidelines you should follow to keep your joint working properly. Most new joints will last for many years and you want to get the most out of your new joint for as long as you can.

Continue to follow a regular exercise program. The stronger the muscles are surrounding your new joint, the less stress on the actual joint. An exercise program will also help you feel better overall and maintain a healthy weight. Carrying around extra pounds over time can put stress on your new joint, so stay active.

Try low-impact activities like swimming, bowling, gardening or walking. Riding a stationary bike is a good, low-impact way to keep your muscles moving. Talk to your healthcare provider about specific activities you may be interested in trying.

Avoid high-impact activities that may damage your new joint. Downhill skiing, jogging, contact sports like hockey, football and basketball, and heavy weightlifting all stress your joints and should be avoided.

When exercising, don't try to do too much too quickly. Over the weeks and months following your surgery, you will notice a gradual increase in the amount you can do. But when you get tired, rest.

And remember, your new joint does not give you extra abilities. You will not be able to suddenly do things that you couldn't do before your surgery. So it is important to remember not to overdo it.

You may notice a clicking sound at the site of your new joint. This is normal and may go away with time.

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Continue to attend your follow-up appointments and physical therapy sessions as scheduled. These appointments are a good time to ask your healthcare provider the questions you have. Between appointments, write down any questions you may have, so you don't forget to ask them at your next appointment.

Make sure you carry a medical information card with you at all times stating you have had joint replacement surgery. Some sensitive security alarms at airports or other buildings may go off because of the metal in your new joint. Have your medical information card ready to avoid unwanted problems in that situation.

Before any new healthcare appointments, let your healthcare provider know you have had a joint replaced. For example, you will now have to take antibiotics before having dental work done, so tell your dentist about your new joint before your appointment.

You may not be able to have an MRI if you have some specific metal joint replacements. Talk to your healthcare provider before having an MRI.

Although there are guidelines to follow, your new joint will allow you to do many of the activities you missed out on before your surgery. Now, you can get the most out of your new joint and your life.

"I need to continue to do exercises that strengthen my back, core muscles, and all of that kind of thing. And I'll keep that up. I will continue to work with the Pilates person that I've worked with, but it will take time."

"Quality of life is great. It's just terrific. My energy level is totally there and I feel really great."