

# Preparing for Your Joint Replacement Surgery

In the weeks leading up to your joint replacement surgery, you may have several medical tests. These include a physical exam, lab tests and blood work, and breathing tests to assess your general health.

Your healthcare provider may recommend you attend a pre-operative class. This is a great place to learn exactly what to expect during your surgery and recovery afterward.

It can also be very helpful to have a “coach”, such as a family member or friend, there to help support you and learn about what you will be going through as well.

*“It was quite informative, and it eased my tensions a lot.”*

*“It was very helpful to hear other people sit in the class and ask questions.”*

In addition to learning about your surgery in a pre-operative class, you will learn specific breathing exercises to reduce your risk of complications and infections.

For example, incentive spirometry and controlled coughing are lung exercises that help you breathe easier by helping you breathe deeper.

You will learn how to do some specific recovery exercises, like knee bends and ankle pumps, to get you moving and reduce your risk of blood clots. You should start to do these recovery exercises now, even before your surgery, to increase the strength of your leg muscles. The stronger you are now, the easier it will be for you to regain your strength and balance after surgery.

Tell your healthcare provider about all the medications you take, including vitamins and supplements. You may need to stop taking some medications, like blood thinners, several days to two weeks before your surgery.

Before your surgery is also the best time to prepare for your hospital discharge. You may plan to go home after your hospital stay or you may choose to go to a rehabilitation facility. Discuss the best option for your recovery with your family, healthcare providers, and insurance provider.

If you do plan to go home, prepare your house before you go to the hospital. If possible, create a living area on one floor so you can avoid stairs.

Pack a small bag to take with you to the hospital. Include comfortable loose-fitting clothing, nightwear, a robe, a toothbrush and toothpaste, and any other personal items that can make your stay more comfortable, like reading glasses or hearing aids. Leave your valuables at home.

Follow your healthcare provider’s specific instructions on how to prepare for surgery, but here are some common instructions: Before your surgery, you may need to shower and shampoo thoroughly with antibacterial soap - especially on your joint.

Don’t eat or drink anything, including mints or gum, for at least 8 hours before surgery. If your mouth is dry, rinse with a small amount of water but be sure to spit it out. If you have been told you can take some of your medications the morning of your surgery, try to take them with water at least two hours before your procedure.

Take your insurance card, identification, and a list of your current medications with you to the hospital.

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At the hospital, you will register and be taken to a pre-op room to get prepared for your surgery. Change into the hospital gown given to you, and remove any personal items like your glasses, contact lenses or dentures and give them to your family member for safekeeping.

A member of your surgical team will prepare your joint for surgery. Speak up if you think she is preparing the incorrect joint or if you have any other questions about your surgery.

As with any surgery, there are risks. Make sure you understand them. If you have any concerns, ask. Your surgical team wants you to feel comfortable in their care.

You will be asked to sign a consent form and then be taken to the operating room.