

Joint Replacement: Your Hospital Stay

Following your joint replacement surgery, you will remain in the hospital for about one to two days. During this time, you and your healthcare providers will work together to get you up and moving and ready to leave the hospital. You may feel weak, and you may be in some pain. But as you get stronger, you need to become an active participant in your own recovery. To do this, your pain must be managed.

The first day of your recovery, pain medications will be given to you in an injection, pill, or IV. If you are still in pain, let your healthcare provider know. They may need to adjust the amount or type of medication you are getting. As you recover, your pain will be managed with pills. Take all your medications as directed. If you don't, you may not want to move as much as you need to in order to recover quickly. If you experience any side effects from your medications, talk to your healthcare provider.

"You may as well going ahead and take couple of doses of the drug that they give you to make you feel better, to knock down that pain so you can be able to operate."

Movement is important to increase your blood circulation and reduce your risk of blood clots. You will start to move your feet and ankles during your first day in the hospital.

"I was really surprised how fast they had me moving, but you know, I guess that's what you have to do to fully recover and have a good outcome."

Support stockings, sequential compression devices and compression boots can also help circulate your blood and reduce swelling. Your healthcare team can show you how to wear them and for how long each day. To strengthen your lungs and prevent infection do the breathing exercises you learned before your surgery. Do these exercises as often as directed.

And begin to work with physical and occupational therapists to get moving. They will help you perform many of the exercises and activities of daily living that you learned during your pre-operative class. Follow their instructions to get the most out of your exercise plan and speed your recovery.

"You know, even though they did say, you know, the next day they was going to start me up and get me going, I still was amazed at it. I'm really amazed at the fact of what I can do now, period. You know, when I was a kid, it was hard to get a tooth pulled, you know what I mean? And today, it's really awesome the things they can do. And they have you up and going so quickly."

In the hospital, staff will help you begin to get out of bed and take short walks. It is normal to be a little worried about taking those first steps. The good news is that you have a support staff right there to help you move safely. Avoid falls by asking someone to help you get in and out of bed, even just to go to the restroom, until your healthcare provider says you are ready to do it on your own. Always wear shoes or socks with treads so your feet can grip the floor.

You will be given crutches or a walker to give you the added support you will need as you recover and heal. Use these; do not start walking on your own until your healthcare provider tells you to. Have your coach - a family member, friend or caregiver - go with you on those first few walks until you feel comfortable enough to go on your own. They can help support you and give you someone to talk to at the same time.

And finally, don't go further than you feel comfortable. If you need to stop and rest, go ahead. Remember, you still have to get back to your room! Recovery is hard work. But the daily physical therapy, occupational therapy,

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and movement exercises you do will increase your strength and balance, so you are ready to leave the hospital and begin your next phase of recovery.