

Joint Replacement: Physical and Occupational Therapies

As you recover from joint replacement surgery, you may find doing certain activities challenging. Physical and occupational therapists are there to help. A physical therapist will help you get up and moving and help you regain strength in your leg muscles through exercise and activity. An occupational therapist will help you perform activities of daily living, such as getting dressed and putting on your shoes - all things you must be able to do before being released from the hospital.

Shortly after your joint replacement surgery, your healthcare provider and rehabilitation therapists will evaluate your level of function. Everybody is different. This evaluation will help your healthcare providers design a therapy plan specifically for you. As soon as you are able become an active participant in your therapy plan. Work with your rehabilitation therapist to set recovery goals. There are activities you must do before being released from the hospital, so having daily goals to work towards can give you the motivation you need to get moving.

In some therapy sessions, you will work one-on-one with your therapist. And some sessions may be in a group setting. Everything you learn during these sessions is important to both your short-term and long-term recovery. The activities will help get you moving now, and after you leave the hospital, you will continue to do these exercises to regain your strength and balance. If you have any questions about the specific exercises, ask your rehabilitation therapists. They are there to help.

Recovery is a lot of work. To help you stay motivated, enlist the help of a friend or family member to be your coach. Not only can your coach give you the support and positive feedback you need, she can also learn some of the exercises with you to ensure you are doing them correctly later on. As you build your strength, you will be able to do more of the activities on your own. To keep your recovery moving forward, continue to set new goals. For example, if you can walk with a walker, perhaps walking with a cane is your next goal.

After you are released from the hospital, continue to follow your rehabilitation plan. Your therapist may recommend you attend outpatient rehab sessions or continue therapy at home. Wherever you continue your recovery, your therapists will prescribe activities and exercises you must do to continue to reach your goals.

The physical and occupational therapists you work with after joint replacement surgery are key members of your recovery team. But you are the most important part of that team. Follow the rehabilitation plan designed for you. Set goals and do the exercises needed to reach those goals. Soon, the activities you found challenging after surgery will be automatic again and you can get back to doing the things you enjoy every day.