



CHA ORTHOPAEDICS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How do I know if I need a total joint replacement?

Arthritis and injury can cause severe pain, making everyday activities and exercise difficult. For some people, a joint replacement is the best solution. The skilled surgeons at CHA can give you a synthetic joint in place of a worn-out joint, to help reduce pain and get you back to a more active life. The most common surgeries here are knee and hip replacements.

Who is a candidate for total joint replacement surgery?

Unfortunately, not everyone is a good candidate for joint replacement surgery. In order to make sure you have the best possible outcome, you have to follow all the requirements set by our orthopaedic surgery team. For example, your primary care doctor must agree that surgery will be safe for you (primary care physician clearance). You must also be checked by a dentist and your body mass index (BMI) must be under 40. If you have diabetes, your blood sugars must be under control. You can't smoke or use nicotine. You must also attend a CHA Total Joint Class.

Please see the Requirements for Total Joint surgery (pre-op) document to learn more.

How long does the surgery take?

Usually 3-4 hours, but this may vary. After surgery, you go right to a hospital bed to start your recovery and rehabilitation.

How long will I be in the hospital after surgery?

Most people stay 2-4 days in the hospital after surgery.

How long will I have pain after my surgery?

Most people feel the most pain during the first two weeks after surgery. Your doctor, nurses, and the rehabilitation staff will work together to help you reduce pain. This includes therapy with pain medications. The pain will get better slowly and it may take a few months to go away completely.

When can I walk on my new joint?

Everyone will get up with the help of Physical Therapy (PT) the first morning after surgery. It is important for you to start moving the new joint right away and put as much weight on it as you can. You will be able to use a rolling walker and will get pain medications to reduce your pain.

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Will I go home or to a rehab facility after surgery?

Your surgery team will talk with you and your case manager about this. They may suggest a discharge plan based on your ability to function, your other medical conditions and your level of support at home. A case manager will help understand your insurance coverage.

Many patients can go home after surgery. In these cases, a home nurse and physical therapist may come to your home in the weeks after surgery. Other patients will go to short term rehab for 1-2 weeks after surgery and then go home.

When will I be able to drive after surgery?

This can vary, based on how quickly you regain strength and mobility, whether you drive an automatic or standard, which leg was operated on, and if you're still taking pain medication. For most people, it takes 6-8 weeks before you can drive again. Plan ahead to arrange rides to medical visits in advance.

Transportation resources:

The Ride: Contact 617-337-2727 to start the process and see if you are eligible.

Door to Door Transportation through SCM: Contact 617-625-1191. Available to people 62 years and older who live in Cambridge, Somerville, Everett and Medford.

When can I travel safely?

For the first 2-3 months after surgery, we suggest you do not travel on an airplane or in the car for more than 1-2 hours. Short trips are fine, but you should stop and take short breaks to walk about and move your new joint at least 2 times every hour.

Because of COVID-19, we recommend against out-of-state travel while you recover.

Will I be tested for COVID-19 before my surgery?

All patients must have a COVID-19 test several days before surgery. We will help coordinate this for you. If you test positive, we will need to reschedule your surgery.

What precautions are being taken to verify the hospital is safe for surgery?

CHA is serious about your health and safety. We have changed many policies because of COVID-19 to keep patients and staff safe. We are following government and industry recommendations.

Should I bring my own mask?

You will need to wear a mask when you arrive at the hospital on the day of surgery. All staff and patients are provided with the personal protective equipment (PPE) they need in the hospital. This includes masks, gowns, gloves, and face shields in the operating room and on the hospital floors.

While I am in the hospital after surgery, will I be in the same area as a patient with COVID-19?

All other patients in the hospital are tested for COVID-19. Any patients who test positive are carefully isolated from other patients.