



CHA ORTHOPAEDICS

## AFTER YOUR SURGERY

It takes time to recover from Total Joint surgery. Most people need a few months to recover.

You should expect to see gradual improvement. It won't happen overnight. But over time you should have less pain, stiffness and swelling. This will let you resume your normal activities!

### Useful tools to help you recover faster and keep you safe:

#### Incentive Spirometer – used by all patients after surgery

This hand-held device helps your lungs stay clear. Breathe in as deeply as you can then slowly breathe out. Repeat the deep breath ten times and then try to cough. This should be done every hour while you are in the hospital.

#### Knee Immobilizers – for patients after a Total Knee Replacement

This fastens around the knee with velcro and prevents the knee from bending. It helps keep the knee straight when you are resting after surgery, and prevents the knee from buckling while you are walking.

### How much weight can be put through your leg after surgery?

Your Doctor will let your Physical Therapist know how much weight you can safely put through your leg after the surgery. We will explain this to you during therapy.

You will need a walker or crutches to help you walk after surgery. Your Physical Therapist will help decide which is best for you and will show you how to use it.

Most patients are able to put as much of their full body weight as they can tolerate (based on pain) on their leg that had the joint replacement while using a walker or crutches.

### Your doctor may suggest the following options for weight bearing after surgery:

- **Weight Bearing as Tolerated:** You can put as much weight through your leg as you wish. To reduce pain it is OK to put some of the weight through the walker.
- **Partial Weight Bearing:** You can put about 50% of your weight through your leg. You should put the rest of the weight through the walker.
- **Touch Down Weight Bearing:** Be careful. You only want to place your foot on the floor lightly to help with balance. Apply minimal pressure.

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### How to rate your pain



- The nursing and rehab staff will often ask you to rate your pain on a scale of 0 to 10.
- A zero is no pain and a 10 is the most pain you could imagine.
- Your therapist will coordinate your therapy visits around your pain medications to reduce discomfort.
- Too much pain medication may make you feel lightheaded or nauseous when you get up with therapy.

### Tips to help you manage pain after surgery:

- Pace yourself. Take breaks and allow the area to rest often.
- Use an ice pack or cold pack. Place on the painful area for 15-20 minutes. Repeat every 2 hours.
- Apply a light massage to the area and elevate above the heart for 10 to 15 minutes.
- Apply gentle compression to the area with an ace bandage or stocking.
- Practice relaxation techniques like visualization, deep breathing, or listening to music.
- Follow a healthy diet with good amounts of protein, fluids and electrolytes.
- Try to sleep 8 hours a night. This is when the body does most of its healing.
- Practice your home exercises to reduce stiffness and improve your mobility.
- Please ask your doctor or therapist about these tips if you want to learn more.

### CHA PHYSICAL THERAPY SERVICES

#### Outpatient Office Locations

##### **CHA Assembly Square**

5 Middlesex Avenue, Somerville, MA 02145  
Phone: 617-591-4601 Fax: 617-591-4610

##### **CHA Everett Hospital**

103 Garland Street, Everett, MA 02149  
Phone: 617-381-7175 Fax: 617-381-7214

##### **CHA Malden Bone and Joint Center**

195 Canal Street, Malden, MA  
Phone: 617-665-1566

#### Hospital Services (PT and OT)

##### **CHA Cambridge Hospital**

1493 Cambridge Street, Cambridge MA 02139  
Phone: 617-665-1000



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# WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER SURGERY

## What will you need to do in therapy after surgery?

You will be visited by a physical therapist the morning after your surgery. The therapist will lead you through exercises to regain strength and mobility. With the therapist's help, you will be asked to stand using a walker and try to walk a few steps.

On days 2 and 3 after surgery, you will steadily increase your walking distance and independence. You may also practice going up and down stairs to help you go home safely, especially if there are stairs to get into your home or up to your bathroom.

Please do not put a pillow under your knee while resting in bed. This makes the knee bend and may make it hard for you to straighten your knee later to walk. You can put a pillow under your heel.

## How will you walk up & down stairs after surgery?

When doing stairs, you will go slowly at first, one at a time. This means both feet arrive on the same step before going up or down to the next one. Just remember this phrase: Up with the Good, and Down with the Bad. (Good leg = Non-surgery leg, Bad leg = Surgery leg)

When going UP stairs, you will step up with the GOOD leg first, followed by the BAD.

When going DOWN stairs, the BAD leg will step down first, followed by the GOOD leg.

## How long will you stay in the hospital after surgery?

This varies per patient. Most patients are in the hospital for about 3 days after surgery. Some patients need to go to a rehabilitation facility for a short time before returning home, but most go straight home.

## CASE MANAGEMENT

While you are in the hospital, the Case Management team will work with you and your insurance plan to understand your coverage and benefits. This will help guide your hospital visit and plan your care once you leave the hospital.

If the surgery team feels that a short term rehab facility would be the best for you, the case managers will help arrange this. If you are able to go home after the hospital and your insurance plan has Visiting Nurse (VNA) benefits, then the Case Manager will help arrange this for you.

Some insurance plans do not cover short term rehabilitation or visiting nurse services. In these cases, you will go straight home but may need another day or two in the hospital until it is safe for you to return home.