Arthritis Pain and Delayed Surgery: A Q&A with Experts

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Submitting Questions and Using the Chat

▼ Use the Q & A section to ask the presenters your questions. Some of the questions will be chosen for the live question period at the end of the webinar.

▼ Click on the chat button to connect with other participants and the Arthritis Society’s chat moderator.

▼ You can choose who to send the message to, or close the chat function depending on your preferences.
Overview

- Surgical wait times in Canada and the impact of COVID-19
- What to expect as hospitals re-start scheduled surgeries
- Managing arthritis and arthritis pain at home
How has COVID-19 changed the landscape of joint surgeries in Canada?
Osteoarthritis

- Affects 5 million Canadians (1 in 6)
- No cure
- Arthritis is the leading cause of joint replacements
  - 99% of knee replacements
  - 80% of hip replacements
- Hip, knee, shoulder, spine, foot, ankle, etc.

Hip Surgery

Shoulder Surgery

Ankle Surgery

Foot Surgery
How long are surgery wait times in Canada (pre-COVID-19)?

- Benchmark wait times set by provinces and territories
  - Hip replacements: 6 months (182 days)
  - Knee replacements: 6 months (182 days)

- In reality, about 1/3 of patients do not receive their hip or knee procedure within recommended times

- Even higher proportion do not reach benchmarks for other arthritic joints (e.g. spine or ankle)
Big variations by region

% Replacement Procedures
Meeting Wait Time Benchmarks

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What happened to surgeries during COVID-19?

- All scheduled surgeries in Canada postponed since mid-March to devote hospital and staff resources to COVID-19 and protect patients.
- Impacted many, many surgeries (>100,000), numbers growing by the day.
- Delayed surgeries have many health and social implications.
How long will it take for the healthcare system to recover?

- Most provinces are slowly re-starting scheduled surgeries

- Could take over 2 years to catch up
  - Without increased capacity we may never catch up

- Advocacy and investment in arthritis care is desperately needed
Vicious Cycle: Arthritis does more than hurt!

- Pain / Limited activity
- Dependent Living Earlier Death
- Loss of Productivity / Care Giving
- Loss of Independence Social Isolation
- Poor Health Increase risk of Heart Disease, Diabetes, Depression...
How will surgeries be prioritized?

Early principles:

- Stable number of COVID-19 cases
- Stable supply of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Stable supply of medications
- Adequate capacity for inpatient and intensive care unit beds
- Adequate capacity of health human resources
- Availability of post-acute care outside hospitals (after discharge)
- Cancer and cardiac surgeries prioritized
- Some acknowledge hip and knee replacements and other scheduled orthopaedic surgeries
How to clear the surgery backlog?

- Boost operating room capacity
- Boost nursing care
- Boost pre- and post-surgery care
- Funding
- May also be delays for people who haven’t yet seen a surgeon or are on a waitlist
How can I advocate for arthritis during COVID-19?

- Send an email to your elected representatives

- Ask them to work together on three key priorities:
  - Access to medications
  - Reduce wait times for joint replacement surgery
  - Invest in arthritis research

[arthritis.ca/TakeAction]
Will it be safe to go into hospitals once surgeries resume?
What extra precautions will hospitals take to ensure the safety of patients?

Patients can expect things like:

• COVID-19 screening for patients
• Awareness of asymptomatic carriers
• Hospital staff in full PPE
• Greater use of telemedicine/virtual care (e.g. pre-surgery assessments)
• Fewer patients per room
• Fewer patients in waiting rooms
• Increased cleaning frequency
What extra precautions should patients take when going into hospital for surgery?

- Self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms and report any concerns to your healthcare provider before going into hospital
  - Fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, runny nose
  - Do not withhold reporting symptoms

- Expect your surgery to be rescheduled if you have symptoms

- Follow public health recommendations for transmission prevention:
  - Physical distancing (2m)
  - Hand washing
  - Mask wearing (if physical distancing not possible)
  - etc.
Can a family member or friend come to hospital with me?

- Most hospitals have “no visitor” policies in place

- Check with your hospital regarding updates to specific policies or any exceptions

- Any allowed visitors should follow public health recommendations for transmission prevention
Some people with arthritis may be experiencing worsening symptoms right now. What should they do?
What do I do if I need medical care?

- If you need serious medical care, do not delay or avoid calling 911
  - Hospitals and emergency rooms are equipped to keep people safe in Canada
  - Notify healthcare providers if you have any flu-like symptoms
- For in-person medical appointments, confirm ahead of time if you have any symptoms and notify the site before going
- Many sources of virtual care (e.g. online physician visits, pharmacist education, therapist consultations)
- Consider delaying unnecessary in-person visits
- Medication delivery available from most pharmacies
Can I take my arthritis medications? Am I immunocompromised because I have OA?
Are osteoarthritis patients immunocompromised?

- Arthritis describes a group of over 100 inflammatory diseases
- While rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis both have joint symptoms, the cause is different

- Rheumatoid arthritis
  - Most forms are autoimmune: body’s internal defense mechanisms attack healthy tissue

- Osteoarthritis
  - Most common form of arthritis
  - “Wear-and-tear”
  - Breakdown of cartilage with inability to repair damaged joint tissue
Is it safe to take the medications I use to manage my osteoarthritis pain during this pandemic?

- Yes

- You shouldn’t make any changes to your medications without speaking with your healthcare provider
Should I be using medical cannabis during this pandemic?

- You should be consulting a healthcare professional if you are currently taking, or considering medical cannabis to manage your arthritis pain symptoms.

- If you are currently benefitting from the use of medical cannabis, continue to use it for the reason you started it.
  - There is no known benefit of cannabis on COVID-19.

- Inhaled cannabis is not recommended at any time; the risk of impacts on lungs and airways, particularly during any respiratory infection, is significant.
Do any dietary supplements help with joint pain?

- Herbal supplements can contain many compounds
- Active and inactive ingredients and how they interact is not always known
- “Natural” does not automatically mean “safe”
- There is variable evidence depending on supplement

- OK to try? Yes: Glucosamine/chondroitin, omega 3s/fish oil, avocado soybean unsaponifiables (ASU), vitamin D, turmeric
- OK to try? Maybe: Methylsulfonylmethane (MSM), S-Adenosyl-L-methionine (SAMe)
What can I do now to manage my arthritis pain?
How can I manage my arthritis pain at home?

Self-management: Physical activity
- Misconception: painful joints require rest!
- Not enough movement can cause muscle weakness and worsening joint pain and stiffness
- Light to moderate activity like walking, gardening, household chores

Self-management: Exercise
- Motions that improve flexibility, strength or endurance
- Therapeutic exercises: improves connections and response time between your brain and muscles and increase coordination
- Range of motion exercises (stretching or flexibility)
- Strengthening exercises: maintain or increase muscle tone (resistance training)
- Endurance exercises (walking, swimming, cycling)
What physical activity is recommended for someone with arthritis?

- Any increase in physical activity or exercise may help
- Frequency, intensity and type varies by person
- Establish a goal and a plan for how to achieve it
- Work towards your goal in realistic increments
- Include short term targets to get to your goal
What are good exercises for someone with arthritis?

1. Ankle circles
   - Sit upright in chair with feet stretched out in front. Rotate feet in one direction.

2. Heel/toe lift
   - Lift each heel and toe individually.

3. Knee raises
   - Lift each knee individually.

4. Leg lift with ankle movements
   - Lift one leg at a time, keeping ankle plantarflexed.

5. Shoulder stretches
   - Perform shoulder stretches as shown in the diagrams.

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How do I manage my back pain specifically?

- Back pain is #1 cause of disability worldwide
- Experienced by about 80% of population at some point
- Many types of arthritis can cause back pain
- Stay as active as you can
- Self-management strategies including back exercises
- Pain-relieving medications

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What are good exercises for someone with arthritis?

Home modifications

Knee to Chest
How can I protect my joints from further damage?

- Pace yourself by alternating heavy/repeated tasks with lighter ones
- Keep your joints aligned (e.g. avoid bending your back when lifting)
- Avoid excess joint stress
- Consult a therapist for a customized exercise program (physiotherapist) and advice on assistive devices and adaptations for home and work (occupational therapist)
- Assistive devices (e.g. raised seat, reacher, walker, cane)
- Maintain a healthy body weight
Where to find trusted self-management online resources?

**TOP 10 EXERCISES**

All exercises should be performed 20 times or as tolerated

1. **Ankle Circles**
   - Sit upright, keep abdominal muscles tight, chest high with legs stretched out in front
   - Slowly circle your feet in one direction 20 times, then in the other direction 20 times (if you have difficulty try using one leg at a time)

2. **Heel/Toe Lift**
   - Sit upright on the edge of a chair or stool with your feet flat on the floor
   - Lift heels for three seconds, keeping toes on the floor
   - Return feet to flat position then lift toes for three seconds

3. **Knee Raises**
   - Sit upright on the edge of a chair or stool
   - Keeping abdominal muscles tight, lift one knee as high as you can without bending your back (you can assist lifting your knee higher with your hands)
   - Slowly lower your foot down to the floor
   - (Note: Avoid this exercise if you’ve had a total hip replacement)

4. **Leg Lift with Ankle Movements**
   - Sit upright, keeping abdominal muscles tight and back supported, then slowly straighten your knee
   - With the knee slightly bent, point your toes straight ahead, then reverse to point toes toward the ceiling
   - Lower leg
   - Repeat with other leg

5. **Shoulder Stretches**
   - Sit or stand with good posture, forearms close together in front of the body (Note: This start position is not suitable for those with osteoporosis)
   - Open arms at shoulder height, elbows bent and palms facing forward, squeezing shoulder blades together
   - Stretch arms overhead, keeping elbows out in line with body

Explore new virtual options:
- Your gym
- Studio classes
- Group classes
- etc.

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Online Learning Modules: Daily Living and Staying Active

THREE TYPES OF EXERCISE

- Strength training
- Flexibility training
- Balance training
Being home with arthritis
What precautions should I be taking while at home?

- Protect your joints
- Take breaks
- Make time for exercise and physical activity
- Maintain a healthy diet
  - Limit saturated and trans fats
  - Reduce sugar intake
  - Eat more vegetables and fruit
- Take advantage of virtual care options
  - Arthritis Rehabilitation and Education Program (AREP) Ontario (1-800-321-1433 ext. 1301)
How to make the most of it?

- Focused Breathing Exercise
- Top 10 Arthritis Exercises
- 15 Tips for Self-Care

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Reputable COVID-19 resources

- Arthritis Society (arthritis.ca)
- Arthritis Rehabilitation and Education Program (AREP, virtual care in ON) (1-800-321-1433 ext.1301)
- Arthritis Consumer Experts (https://jointhehealth.org)
- Canadian Arthritis Patient Alliance (arthritispatient.ca)
- Government of Canada (Canada.ca)
- U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC.gov)
- Patient Support Programs
Stay Home
Stay Healthy
Stay Safe
Tell us what you think...
Help support future information events

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