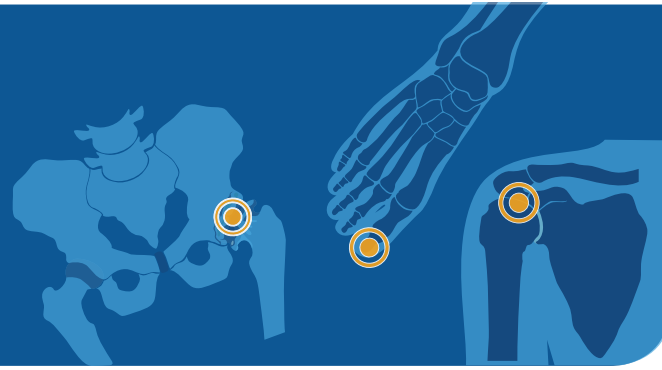


Long-Term Functioning After Surgery



After joint surgery, many people can perform daily activities more easily and with less pain. This can mean a better quality of life, improved mobility and increased strength. However, even after the initial recovery is complete, it is vital that you take care of your new and improved joint to ensure it continues to serve you well.

Optimizing Long-Term Outcomes

While your joint surgery may greatly improve your pain, mobility and function, it will not necessarily enable you to do more than you did before developing osteoarthritis (OA). In fact, it may not be appropriate to return to some of the activities you did before surgery.

If you had joint replacement surgery and are therefore living with a new knee, hip or shoulder, you may have increased awareness of the joint and encounter occasional stiffness or “crackling” sounds. These are normal and do not indicate that the joint replacement surgery was unsuccessful.



Exercise

Key to maintaining the long-term success of your new joint is to maintain your therapeutic exercises and avoid high-impact activities. For instance, if you had knee replacement surgery, jogging may be too high-impact for the new knee. This kind of activity can increase wear-and-tear between the components of your new joint, which are made of materials like ceramic or metal and plastic. Aim for lower-impact exercises and activities, like walking or swimming. Golfing may be fine for some joints, but you should not return to golf immediately after shoulder replacement. As with any new exercise routine or activity, talk to your doctor first.



Weight Management

If your new joint is weight-bearing, you can minimize stress on it by managing your weight. Excess weight can increase strain on the foot, ankle, knee or hip joints, and can also impact your hands, wrists, elbows and shoulders. The additional tension could, over time, cause loosening of a joint replacement.





Infections

Infections can occur in artificial joints many years after the original surgery. Once you've had a joint replaced, you should always be more careful if you develop a systemic or local infection affecting any part of your body. Let the healthcare professionals caring for you know that you have an artificial joint. In rare occasions, bacteria from an infection somewhere else in your body can spread to the artificial joint and cause it to become infected, which can be very serious and may even require surgery. Treating problems such as skin and dental infections rapidly can help to reduce the risk of developing an infection in your artificial joint.



Follow-up

You should also follow up with your surgeon every two to five years after surgery to check on your joint. To prepare for these follow-up appointments, keep track of any changes in function or mobility, or new symptoms worth noting. Take the opportunity to ask about long-term functioning and to discuss any concerns you have with your surgeon. It is important that you see your surgeon right away if you have any new symptoms, pain or dysfunction in the joint that was operated on.

How long will the new joint last?

Most joint replacements last between 20 and 25 years. By taking care of your body and your joint, you could extend the life of the replacement joint even longer. Although you may have regained mobility and function, you should continue your exercises and weight management to keep the joint healthy and strong.

Revision surgery

In some cases, people who have had a joint replacement may need to have surgery at a later time to receive another new joint. This is called "revision surgery." If you require a revision, it's likely that the first artificial joint has simply worn down over time or become loose, which can cause pain and dysfunction. Other reasons for revision surgery include an infection in the joint or a fracture around the artificial joint. It is very uncommon to need revision surgery in the first few years after the initial joint replacement, but that should not deter you from taking care of your new joint from the point of surgery onwards to ensure its longevity.

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