

ST. VINCENT'S NAVIGATION

JOINT REPLACEMENT



Now that you have decided to have a joint replacement.

Dear Patient:

We know you are probably a little anxious and these feelings are normal. Just remember, you have many people working very hard to keep you comfortable and make this operation a success for you.

This presentation will provide you with information/guide about how you should prepare for surgery and suggestions of things to help you at home. We hope that you will find your experience here at St. Vincent's Health System to be pleasant, safe and educational. Please let us know of any concerns, questions or problems you may have during your stay.

Our team consists of:

- Orthopedic surgeons who specialize in joint replacement
- Physician assistants and orthopedic fellows, who assist with your care
- Nurses who oversee all aspects of your care
- Physical therapists and occupational therapists who will assist you with walking, exercises and resuming activities of daily living
- Case management who will help address your needs for home/discharge
- Orthopedic navigators who will provide extra support both pre-operatively and post operatively

What is total joint replacement?

- Metal, plastic and/or ceramic used to create a new smooth functioning cushion that relieves pain and helps mobility.
- In a total knee replacement, a metal cap is placed on both thigh and shin bones with a special plastic in between.
- In a partial knee replacement or Uni-knee, a similar prosthesis is placed on only one side of the knee and is generally performed through a smaller incision.
- In a total hip replacement, a new socket is placed into the pelvis (acetabulum) while a metal or ceramic ball attached to metal stem is inserted down the thigh bone. A liner is placed in between that helps keep ball in place.

Am I too old for this surgery?

Age is not a factor as long as you are in reasonably good health and have the desire to return to a productive lifestyle. You will need to see your primary care physician and/or any other specialist deemed necessary to obtain clearance for surgery.

Will my insurance cover the cost of total joint replacement?

- Medicare and most insurance companies do cover the surgery if your deductible has been met.
- You will need to check with your individual insurance plan to see what is covered after the surgery as plans vary. Specifically, please investigate whether your insurance will cover home health physical therapy, outpatient physical therapy, skilled nursing facility or inpatient rehab hospital.

Is there pain after surgery?

- Yes, but it is a different type of pain than what you have been enduring. You will have incision pain that will go away with time.
- During your post-operative period, you will be given pain prescriptions for home use.
- You can expect to have an increase in pain when you begin activity and exercises, so we will coordinate your pain medicine with physical therapy sessions.

When can I start walking?

- You may be able to sit up on the side of the bed and walk in the room/hallway if you are awake, comfortable and able to participate on the day of surgery with assistance.
- The next morning you will sit up in a recliner, and walk in your room/hall using a walker with the assistance of a physical therapist or staff.

How long will I be in the hospital?

Most joint replacement patients are in the hospital 2-3 days.

What type of equipment will I need when I go home?

- Depending on your stability and your home environment, you will need a walker and possibly a bedside commode.
- This will be discussed with you on an individual basis.

When can I drive and return to normal?

- Most patients start to drive about one month after surgery.
- Usually surgery on the left side allows one to drive sooner.
- This varies with each patient and surgeon.
- Your physician will advise you when he thinks it is safe for you to drive.
- DO NOT drive while narcotics are required for pain control.

Are there any physical restrictions following my total joint replacement surgery?

For Knee patients:

- Avoid kneeling whenever possible.
- Must use assistive devices (walker or cane) until muscle strength returns – usually best determined by a therapist.
- DO NOT place a pillow directly behind the operative knee. It is important for your knee to remain straight so that you can regain as much range of motion as possible.

Expectations after surgery

For Knee patients:

- You may notice some clicking with your new knee movements.
- This is normal and is a result of the artificial surfaces coming together.

Are there any physical restrictions following my total joint replacement surgery?

For Hip patients:

- You will need to adhere to the “HIP guidelines/precautions” you are given at the hospital.
- This will be determined by your physician and based on the anterior or posterior surgical incision.
- Must use assistive devices (walker or cane) until muscle strength returns and you are able to balance good – best determined by a therapist.

Expectation after surgery

For Hip patients:

- Initially, you may note stiffness of the hip and a limp when you walk.
- These typically subside with time and proper post-operative exercises.

To-do list before surgery:

- Plan a surgery date.
- If you're having your surgery at St. Vincent's Birmingham, call 205-212-6032 to speak with an orthopedic navigator and schedule a pre-operative joint class. Call 205-212-6608 to make an appointment for your pre-admission testing. During this appointment, you will meet with a nurse to review your medical history, have lab work completed and be provided with a bottle of special soap, along with instructions on how to use it.
- If you're having your surgery at St. Vincent's East, please call 205-838-3164 to schedule your pre-operative joint class and pre-admission testing.
- Make arrangements to have a family member or friend stay with you for the first 1-2 weeks when you return home after surgery.

To-do list before surgery:

- Arrange to have any dental work or oral hygiene issues resolved prior to your surgical date.
- Obtain medical/cardiology clearance if indicated or requested by your surgeon.
- Consider therapy prior to your surgery if needed to improve function/strength.
- Have a plan for care after your hospital stay and discuss this with your surgeon.

Nasal swab

- We perform a test on all patients having a total joint replacement that will involve the inside of your nose being swabbed.
- If the test is positive, your surgeon's office will call in a medication called Bactroban. You will apply this medication to the inside of your nasal passages two times a day for five days.

Inform your surgeon

- Speak with your doctor about any medications that you take (prescribed and over-the-counter medication, vitamins and any herbal medicine).
- Bring a list of ALL medications you are taking (with the dosage) to the hospital.
- You may need to stop taking these medications before your surgery, especially blood thinners. Examples: Coumadin, Aspirin, Lovenox, Heparin, Plavix, Arixtra, anti-inflammatory drugs such as Motrin, Advil, Indocin, Ibuprofen, Relafen, Nalfon, Aleve. Your doctor will inform you which medication to stop.

Inform your surgeon

- This is not a complete list, so tell your doctor about all medications that you take.
- Inform your doctor of any allergies, sensitivities or intolerances to medications, food or latex.

Alcohol consumption

- Please make your surgeon aware of how much, how often and what type of alcohol you consume.
- If your surgeon is unaware you drink daily, complications could occur in a short period of time following your surgery.

Prepare your home

It will take a while to regain your energy level, stamina and full mobility. The more you are able to prepare ahead, the easier your transition home will be.

Some suggestions:

- Prepare meals ahead and freeze them or stock up on frozen dinners
- Store frequently used items at easy-to-reach levels. This will prevent you from having to reach overhead or below your hip level while using a walker.
- Make sure walking paths in the home are clear and uncluttered (from bedroom to bathroom and to kitchen and living area where you will spend your time).

Prepare your home

- Remove throw rugs, phone cords, and electrical cords. Make sure there are no trip hazards.
- Install night lights in all areas that you will occupy at night to prevent a fall.
- Look at your home for any safety issues that would interfere with using a walker.
- Pets are a fall hazard after surgery, so plan prior to your surgery for someone to care for them for a short period.
- Make a “day recovery area” for your convenience.
- If needed, install handrails in the bathroom and/or along stairways to increase stability.
- Install a ramp on stairs/steps if needed.

Hospital needs

- You will need to bring loose clothing to wear for physical therapy session (loose gym shorts, T-shirt, comfortable shoes, i.e. tennis shoes).
- Plan for approximately two days of clothing. You will wear hospital gowns for the first day.
- You will need your grooming items, such as toothpaste, tooth brush, deodorant and hair brush.
- Before surgery, if you should become ill with fever, cold, sore throat or other illness, notify your surgeon before coming to the hospital.

Hospital items

- Leave valuables at home. This includes jewelry, medications, keys and cash. If you plan to use the bedside prescription delivery service, make sure to bring your insurance card and a form of payment such as check, debit card or credit card.
- If you wear dentures, bridges or hearing aids, you are encouraged to wear them. Leave contact lenses at home or bring them to wear after surgery. If you wear glasses, bring glasses with you to the hospital.
- If you use a C-PAP to sleep, bring it to the hospital.

No smoking policy:

- St. Vincent Health System is a “smoke free environment.” You may not smoke in your room or anywhere on the hospital grounds. This includes e-cigarettes.
- Remember bone healing is delayed by smoking.

The night before surgery

- DO NOT eat or drink anything (not even water) after midnight the night before your scheduled surgery, unless your surgery is scheduled in the afternoon and your surgeon allows some food or drinks. Make sure to follow instructions as this is a safety issue and would cause a delay or cancellation of your scheduled surgery.
- You may brush your teeth but DO NOT swallow the water.
- Your physician may tell you to take your morning dose of heart or blood pressure medicine with a sip of water. The pre-admission testing nurse, orthopedic nurse navigator or the anesthesiologist will let you know.
- Shower with the soap provided by pre-admission testing.
- Remove any nail polish.

Parking and arrival at St. Vincent's Birmingham

- Park in the parking deck adjacent to the Ortho Sports Building. The entrance is located at St. Vincent's by POB 3.
- Enter and follow signs to the parking level for Ortho Sports (level K).
- You can buy discount parking coupons in the Le Shoppe Gift Shop located on level 2 in the main hospital. Parking coupons are 5 for \$15.00 (they never expire).

Parking and arrival at St. Vincent's Birmingham

- Plan to arrive two (2) hours prior to your scheduled surgery time. You will park and come to the surgery waiting room on the 4th floor in the Ortho Sports Building.
- You will be told the exact time to arrive. Once you arrive, the staff will direct you on what to do. Do not wear tight-fitting clothes on the day of your procedure or surgery.
- An anesthesiologist may talk to you before your surgery. This caregiver may give you medicine to make you sleepy before your procedure or surgery. Tell your caregiver if you or anyone in your family has had a problem using anesthesia in the past.

Parking and arrival at St. Vincent's East

- Please park in Lot O at no charge. Entrance to pre-admission/same-day services is located across the street from Lot O.
- After parking, go directly to the same-day services reception window located on the third floor of the hospital.

Consent for surgery

- The risk, benefits and possible complications of having a total joint replaced or not having the surgery will be discussed with you by your surgeon.
- If you decide to proceed with surgery after your discussion with your surgeon, you will then sign a consent for surgery.

During surgery

- Your surgeon will make an incision (cut) where the implant will be placed.
- Blood vessels, nerves, muscles and other tissues will be carefully separated to expose the joint. Once exposed, special tools will be used to insert the implant, wires or screws.
- A new joint will be placed and attached to the bone. The incision will be closed using stitches (thread) or staples and then covered with bandages.

After surgery

- You will be taken to the recovery room, where you will stay until you are fully awake. Caregivers will watch you closely for problems.
- After your recovery time, you will be taken to your hospital room.
- You will have a bandage covering your incision. This will keep the area clean and dry to help prevent infections.

Deep breathing and coughing

- Deep breathing helps to open the air passages in your lungs. Coughing helps to bring up sputum (mucus) from your lungs. You can deep breathe and cough on your own or with the help of an incentive spirometer.
- Practice taking a deep breath and hold the breath as long as you can. Then push the air out of your lungs with a deep, strong cough. Put any sputum that you have coughed up into a tissue and throw it away.
- Take 10 deep breaths in a row every hour that you are awake, even during the night. Remember to follow each deep breath with a cough.

Preventive precautions

- **Preventing deep vein thrombosis:** Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) is a condition where blood clots form inside your blood vessels. This can happen after having a major bone surgery. Ask your caregiver for more information about deep vein thrombosis.
- **Compression stockings:** Your caregiver may have you wear compression stockings. These are tight elastic stockings that put pressure on your legs after your surgery. The pressure is strongest in the toe and decreases as it goes towards the thighs.
 - Wearing pressure stockings helps push blood back towards the heart and keeps clots from forming.

Preventive precautions

SCD hose: These are cloth-like wraps put on your legs over pressure stockings. The wraps are connected to an air pump machine. The pump tightens and loosens different parts of the wraps at certain times. This helps push the blood back up to the heart to keep clots from forming.

Physical therapy exercises: You will be asked to start moving your legs, standing and walking soon after your surgery. This prevents blood from pooling in your legs and causing clots to form inside your veins.

Preventive precautions

What should I know about blood thinners?

- Your physician will prescribe a blood thinning medication for a short period of time following your surgery.
- This medicine helps stop clots from forming in the blood. Clots can cause strokes, heart attacks and death.
- Blood thinners may make it easier to bleed or bruise. While taking this medicine, use a soft toothbrush to prevent bleeding gums.
- If you shave, use an electric shaver. Watch for bleeding from your gums or nose.
- Watch for blood in your urine and bowel movements.

Signs and symptoms of a blood clot

DVT (blood clot located in your lower leg)

- Calf tenderness, redness, warmth and swelling.
- If you are concerned you are developing a DVT, contact your surgeon's office immediately.

PE (blood clot located in your lungs)

- Sudden onset shortness of breath, feeling anxious or that something bad is about to happen, sweaty and possible loss of consciousness.
- If you are concerned you are developing a PE, call 911.

Busy times during your hospital stay

- Physical therapists will work with you every day to meet the goals your surgeon has established.
- Vital signs: Caregivers will check your blood pressure, heart rate, breathing rate and temperature.
- Pain: You will be asked about the level of your pain on a scale of 0-10.
- Lab will collect blood early in the mornings as ordered by your MD.
- Dietary will be in each day to collect your meal selection (with your ordered dietary guidelines).
- Your dressing/bandage will be changed as ordered by your doctor.
- Case management will visit you to assist with any needs for discharge planning.

Activity

- You will be assisted (walked) to the bathroom or to the bedside commode by nursing or physical therapy staff.
- DO NOT get up without assistance.
- Activity will start with physical therapy to assist you with exercises and teach you how to use a walker.
- Depending on your specific needs, physical or occupational therapy will be consulted to assist you with learning daily living activities (bathing and dressing skills).

Going home suggestions:

- Based on your type of surgery, particularly hip patients, you will need to go home in a vehicle in which you can stretch your leg(s) out comfortably. A standard sedan car that is not too high or too low is most comfortable as it allows adjustment of the seat and more leg room.
- Have someone take your flowers/plants, extra items home a day before discharge if possible. This way you will not have so much stuff to carry on day of discharge.
- If you have a long distance to go, you may want to have someone take your pain medication prescription to be filled before you leave the hospital. This way you will have your pain medication if needed before you arrive home.

Signs and symptoms of infection:

- Temperature greater than 101.5
- Increased redness/warmth at the incision site
- Increased drainage especially if yellow/green in color
- Drainage that is thick or foul smelling
- Chills and body aches

Contact your surgeon's office immediately.

Constipation

- Constipation can become an issue after surgery because of the pain medications you are taking.
- To help prevent constipation, increase your water intake, eat high fiber food and increase your activity.
- As long as patients are taking pain medications, it is a good idea to take a stool softener every day.

Dental appointments after joint replacement

- Make sure your dentist is aware that you have had a joint replacement.
- You will require pre-treatment with antibiotics prior to any dental work. This includes routine cleanings.
- Your surgeon can provide specific recommendations for this antibiotic therapy.
- If any questions arise, contact your surgeon's office.

St. Vincent's pharmacy program

- We provide an optional pharmacy program that fills your new prescriptions prior to discharge.
- If you would like to use this program, be sure to bring insurance information and a form of payment.

Discharge information

Day of discharge:

- Please check your room before leaving for personal articles. A member of our team will take you by wheelchair to the discharge area of the hospital.
- You will be given written instructions on when to return to your physician.
- You will be given written instructions on how to care for you new total joint.
- Case management will help arrange your needs for continued physical therapy and home equipment such as a walker and bedside commode.

THANK YOU FOR THE HONOR OF CARING FOR YOU AND CHOOSING

St. Vincent's Health System
Orthopedic Services