

Frequently Asked Questions



Dr. Belay

How long do joint replacements last?

All implants have a life expectancy depending on the individual's age, weight, activity level and medical condition(s). A total joint implant's longevity will vary in every patient. Major orthopedic studies indicate quite clearly that modern joint replacements are over 90% likely to last 20-30 years or more. Recent studies have found similar success rates over 30 years as well.

Do you use the anterior approach?

You may have heard of success stories after anterior or posterior approach hip replacement. In our practice, either approach is an option for hip replacement. Rather than a one-size fits, we take into account your medical history, activity level and skin health when making the best decision for your hip replacement.

How are robotics used in surgery?

We use technology through robotics or computer navigation to implement our surgical plan with a high degree of accuracy and precision. Studies show there is less variability or outliers when surgery is complimented with the use of technology. There is also evidence that shows it does not increase complications.

What is the healing process like after a joint replacement?

You should expect to be able to put full weight on your new joint on the day of surgery. When you first begin to stand and walk, you may note increased pain. The pain will generally improve drastically over the first few weeks of recovery. For most patients, the first 2-3 weeks are the most difficult. On average, by 4-6 weeks most patients are about 75% recovered. By 3 months, most patients are 90% recovered.

What will my new joint feel like when I am completely healed?

The goal of a joint replacement is improvement of pain and overall function. It is our hope that all of your pain will resolve and you will regain full range of motion of your new joint. Current literature suggests that 95-98% of patients note such significant improvement after their surgery that, if given the chance, they would do it again.

Will I be put to sleep for this surgery?

In the past, intubation was common for joint replacement surgery. This has changed over time. Most commonly, a spinal anesthetic will be provided to you as your main source of anesthesia so that you are numb for the procedure. Additionally, for knee replacements, anesthesia will perform a nerve block prior to surgery. The purpose of the block is to help control the acute pain in the first two to three days following surgery. The block is administered by the anesthesiologist in the pre-

*If you have any problems or questions,
please call your doctor's office (8am-5pm).*

Answering service for after hours.

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operative bay. It takes about 10 minutes and numbs the nerves of the operative leg. The nerve block not only helps with post-operative pain, but also helps to decrease the amount of anesthesia needed during the surgical procedure.

Can I kneel on my new joint replacement?

Yes, though we recommend waiting until the incision is healed. Kneeling will not damage your new knee. Many patients report that kneeling feels strange or uncomfortable but find knee pads help with this. We ask you avoid kneeling directly on to the knee for about 6 weeks.

Can I shower or bathe following surgery?

Yes, you may shower on Day 2 after surgery. The bandage on your leg is water-resistant so there is no need to wrap the leg prior to showering. Let water run over the bandage, then pat the leg dry but avoid rubbing the bandage. No baths, hot tubs, or swimming for 6 weeks following surgery to allow the incision to fully close.

What position can I sleep in?

For knee replacements, the simple answer is any position you are comfortable in. If you have a total knee replacement, try to keep your leg as straight as you can. Constantly sleeping with a pillow under your knee can lead to a flexion contracture and the inability to straighten the knee completely.

For hip replacements, we recommend sleeping with a small pillow between your legs for the first month after surgery. You may find it more comfortable to sleep on your back or side opposite from the incision.

When can I drive after total joint surgery?

There is no set date to begin driving. Studies have shown your brake response time does not return to normal until about 4 weeks after surgery on the right leg. For your safety, we recommend avoiding driving for 2 weeks after left leg surgery and 3-4 weeks after right leg surgery. This is a suggestion as this may not be possible for every patient. We do however recommend not driving with these:

- Do not drive while on narcotics.
- Do not drive if you cannot enter or exit your vehicle in a reasonable amount of time.
- Do not drive if you cannot safely operate a motor vehicle in accordance with state laws.

When you feel you can accomplish these goals and are off narcotics, we recommend you start driving in a parking lot or on slow speed roads that are not heavily populated.

When can I go back to work?

This is highly dependent on your type of work and what your company will allow. Generally, more sedentary work allows you to return sooner than if you perform more physical labor. Our staff goes to great lengths to ensure you have the appropriate amount of time either off from work or at reduced hours to ensure your safety and recovery are optimized.

Are there any permanent restrictions following total joint replacement?

No. We do, however, highlight that high-impact activities may change the overall lifetime of the joint replacement. Compared to 20-30 years, the joint replacement would likely have similar excellent results at 10-15 years. Those activities include running, tennis, basketball and down-hill skiing. You are encouraged to participate in lower-impact activities such as walking, pickle ball, dancing, golfing, hiking, cycling, swimming, bowling, gardening.

Why does my knee or hip feel warm after surgery?

Warmth is a sign of inflammation, which is typical after surgery. Your body heals by bringing blood flow to the area with healing cells. It will take several months for this process to complete and until then, there will be swelling and warmth around the operated leg.

Is “clicking” inside the knee normal?

The clicking is a result of the artificial parts coming into contact with one another. This sensation can be different at first but is normal after a total knee replacement.

Will I require antibiotics for dental procedures after surgery?

Yes. We will prescribe an antibiotic for you to take prior to any dental work following your procedure. If you need a dental visit or procedure within 12 months after your surgery, please contact our office first.