



Total Joint Replacement Surgery Discharging Instructions: What You Need to Know

Thank you for choosing Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare (TMH) for your total joint replacement surgery. We know your goal is to leave the hospital and reclaim your quality of life. Your surgeon has already paved the way for you to have a successful recovery by putting things in motion to prevent any disruption of your healing process. It's important for you to continue these efforts at home. Let's take a look at the five keys to prevention.

1. Prevention of Pain

Pain should be expected after surgery. However, your surgeon will provide different approaches to help the pain be tolerable.

You will be given a local anesthetic during surgery. This is a numbing medication that you may feel the effects of for a couple of days. It is not a narcotic and does not hinder movement.

If you're having a total knee replacement, your surgeon may prescribe a pain pump that will administer an anesthetic directly into the surgical site. This pump will go home with you and can last several days after surgery. To learn more about this special pump, watch three, short informational videos on TMH.ORG/Ortho.

Your surgeon will give you a prescription for pain medication before or after your surgery. The pain medication may be an opioid – such as oxycodone or hydrocodone – and you should take as prescribed. Remember, oral medications take 45 – 60 minutes before you feel the effects and taking them consistently is key. Don't wait for pain, stay ahead of it!

2. Prevention of Swelling

Swelling is a natural part of recovery. Cold therapy is encouraged after total joint replacement surgery. Ice packs are helpful, but always remember to protect your skin by placing a barrier, such as a washcloth, between the icepack and your skin. Apply ice 20 minutes on, 20 minutes off, 5-6 times per day.

3. Prevention of Constipation

Medications, such as oxycodone, hydrocodone or other opioids, that are used for pain management do cause constipation. To help you stay regular, your surgeon recommends that you take a stool softener. You should take them every day that you take your oral pain medication. If you haven't had a bowel movement within 48-hours after surgery, you will need to introduce a laxative. You can buy stool softeners and laxatives at your local retail store – no prescription needed! In conjunction with these medications, it's necessary for you to support your bowels by drinking water, limiting your caffeine intake, and eating fruits and vegetables. Remember, if your bowels become loose you should discontinue these bowel medications.

4. Prevention of Blood Clots

Blood clots are a risk for any surgery. To help prevent blood clots, you will be given blood thinning medication after your surgery. The type of medication, as well as how long you will take the medication, varies depending on your personal medical history. You will receive specific instructions for your blood thinning medication upon discharge from the hospital. In addition to the oral medication, you will need to wear compression stockings on both legs for six weeks. These compression stockings will be given to you on the day of surgery and you will need to take them home. You may take the compression stockings off at night. They may be washed in the washing machine and air dried. Lastly, remember to exercise and walk each day for the prevention of blood clots.



5. Prevention of Infection

Several precautions will be implemented to prevent you from getting an infection. Prior to your surgery, you will be asked to bathe with special soap to help decrease bacteria on your skin. Before and after surgery, you will receive IV and/or oral antibiotics. Your post-operative bandage is unique because it is both antimicrobial (the bandage contains silver, which kills microorganisms) and shower proof! You may shower with this bandage; keeping in mind that you must NOT soak the bandage in a bath, swimming pool, or hot tub. To further protect your surgical site, keep all pets away from the incision and refrain from using creams, lotions, or powders on or near the incision.

Pneumonia can also be a risk after surgery. This can occur because patients may not be as active as directed when they go home. To prevent pneumonia, you will be given an incentive spirometer to take home with you. An incentive spirometer is a breathing machine to exercise your lungs. You should use this device by performing 10 repetitions every hour while awake. You can discontinue this device once you're more active.

Let's get you back to doing what you love.

- At home, it's important for you to Continue performing your provided exercises and stay mobile.
- During your post-operative appointment, typically 10 –14 days after surgery, discuss with your surgeon when is the best time to resume activities based on your individual care plan.

Call your surgeon if you experience:

- A fever greater than 100.5 or higher sustained for 24 hrs or more.
- Increased redness, swelling or tenderness in your incision. (Minor redness and swelling is normal).
- Persistent drainage from your incision that is green, yellow or foul-smelling.
- If bandage becomes saturated and begins to lose its seal.

Call 9-1-1 if you experience:

- Chest pain.
- Shortness of breath.

Do not drink alcohol or drive while taking pain medication. ****No driving until cleared by your surgeon.****

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