

Going Home after Anterior Total Hip Replacement

Here are some common questions patients ask as they get ready to go home after a total hip replacement. If you have any questions after reading this, please talk with your nurse or surgeon.

What should I do for the ride home?

- We suggest you sit in the front seat of the car with the safety belt fastened. For your comfort you may need to adjust the car seat back as far as it will go and recline the seat.
- If you must travel a long distance, plan on stopping each hour to take a short walk and stretch your legs. You may also want to take a dose of pain medicine before you leave the hospital.

When can I take a shower and get my wound wet?

- Ask your surgeon when you may take a shower.
- Do not put any lotion or ointment directly on the incision until you have seen your surgeon.
- Do not get in the shower until the home therapist has reviewed this with you.
- Do not get in a bath tub, a hot tub or go swimming until your surgeon says you can.

What can I do about swelling?

Some leg swelling is normal after surgery. The amount varies from patient to patient. The swelling may decrease if you:

- Put your operated leg on a low stool when you are sitting.
- Wear TED (support) hose during the day. You may remove the TED hose at night.

- Do not sit for long periods of time. Take short walks every 1 to 2 hours.
- Do your ankle pumps every half hour when seated in a chair.

How much pain will I have when I leave the hospital?

Your hip pain should lessen over the next several weeks. It is normal to need pain medicine for a while after surgery. Many patients find they have an increase in pain and swelling when they “overdo it” with their activities. Rest, the use of pain medicine and ice should help get you back on your feet.

What are the signs of a possible hip infection?

Signs of infection include any of these:

- Extreme pain and swelling not relieved with rest/elevation.
- Extreme redness.
- Any drainage from your wound after 7 days after surgery.
- Fever and chills.

Call your surgeon’s office if you have any concerns about infection.

Any infection in your body should be treated right away! If it is not treated, it could spread through your bloodstream to your new hip. A few infections to watch for include urinary tract infections, strep throat and wound infections. Call your primary care physician if you think you have an infection somewhere in your body.

What else do I need to know about infections?

Please check with your surgeon’s office to find out if you will need antibiotics for the following procedures:

- Dental work, dental cleaning and exams
- Cystoscopy and Colonoscopy

Before any dental work or medical procedures, tell the doctor or dentist who is caring for you that you have a total hip replacement. They can prescribe antibiotics for you or call your surgeon’s office if they have any questions.

How can I help prevent blood clots?

- You have been given medicine to help prevent blood clots. Take this medicine as prescribed. Your surgeon will tell you how long you need to take this medicine.
- You should wear your support stockings and do the exercises your surgeon ordered.

What are signs of a blood clot?

You should be concerned if you have pain, swelling, redness or warmth in your leg that does not go away. These may be signs of a blood clot in your leg. Call your surgeon's office if you have any of these problems or any other concerns about blood clots.

Call 911 right away if you suddenly have chest pain or trouble breathing. These may be signs of a blood clot in your lungs.

How long do I have to use my walker?

Use the walker or crutches until the therapist or surgeon tells you otherwise.

How often should I do my exercises?

Your physical therapist has shown you exercises to do for your hip and should also give you a handout with these exercises before you go home. Do the exercises 2 to 3 times a day.

If pain is a problem, take your pain medicine 30 to 45 minutes before you exercise. Use a cold pack for 15-20 minutes after you exercise.

Make sure to follow any specific activity restrictions from your surgeon and/or therapist.

When can I drive/travel?

- You may ride in a car as soon as you are comfortable. We suggest you start with short trips to places you know.
- You might be more comfortable if you move the car seat back and/or recline it to give you more leg room.
- You may drive again when your surgeon says you can.

When can I resume sexual activity?

You may resume sexual activity when you are comfortable. Contact your surgeon or therapist if you have questions.

When do I see my surgeon again?

You should have a follow-up appointment with your surgeon in 2-6 weeks. Call your surgeon's office to confirm date and time of appointment.

This info is a general resource. It is not meant to replace your health care provider's advice. Ask your doctor or health care team any questions. Always follow their instructions.