

TREATMENT

Total Hip and Knee Replacement: Questions Patients Should Ask Their Surgeon

The goal of orthopaedic treatment is to relieve pain and restore function. In planning your treatment, your doctor will consider many things, including your age, activity level, and general health. If nonsurgical treatment methods, such as medication and physical therapy, do not relieve your symptoms, your doctor may recommend [total joint replacement](#).

Your doctor and healthcare team will provide you with information to help you prepare for surgery. Don't be afraid to ask questions, especially if you don't understand something. The following list of questions can help you in your discussions with your doctor before your surgery.

- Do I have to have surgery? If I do not have surgery, what are the short-term and long-term risks?
- Can you give me any information on outcomes (past results) and complication rates for the procedure you are recommending?
- Is the skill and experience of the orthopaedic surgeon more important than the procedure, device, or technique the surgeon uses?
- Do you regularly perform total joint replacement as part of your practice? How many do you perform each year?
- How many total hip or knee replacements does your hospital or surgery center perform per year?
- Which surgical approach do you use for performing a total joint replacement? Does this approach really make a meaningful difference in the result, or does it pose unnecessary risks?
- Would you use [robotics](#) to perform my surgery? What are the pros and cons of robotic-assisted total joint replacement?
- What are the pros and cons of minimally invasive (mini-incision) total joint replacement surgery?
- Will I be able to bear weight and walk after surgery?

- Will I need a [walker, crutches, or a cane](#) to walk after surgery? For about how long will I need one of those devices?
- Is physical therapy necessary after surgery?
- How long will I be in the hospital? Can I be discharged the same day as surgery, or do I have to stay overnight?
- How much pain can I expect, and how will it be managed in the hospital and after I go home?
- Will I have a dressing (bandage) that will allow me to shower after my total joint replacement? When will this dressing be removed?
- Will I have stitches or staples for my incision? When and where will these need to be removed?
- What will I be able to do/not do after my total joint replacement?
- How long will the total joint replacement last, and what can I do to make it last as long as possible?
- What are the major and/or most frequent complications following surgery?
- Am I at greater risk for any specific complications?
- What can I do to decrease my risk of complications?
- Which signs or symptoms should I look out for after surgery that may mean something is wrong?
- Who do I contact after surgery if I have a question or problem, and what is the best way to reach them (e.g., phone call, text, page, message in my patient portal)?

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