



Your Guide to Joint Replacement



Hackensack Meridian
Mountainside Medical Center

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Your next adventure *shouldn't start with joint pain*

Joint pain can be easy to ignore; what starts as a small ache could turn into discomfort that derails your daily life. This type of pain can come in a variety of forms. It can be constant or worsen with movement or activity and can appear as burning, throbbing, grating or stiffness in joints.

For some patients who meet certain criteria, joint replacement can be an effective option. Explore this guide for more information about joint replacement, the causes of joint pain and other treatment options that could help relieve your pain and restore your mobility.



What are my treatment options?

Surgical

For some patients, surgery may be recommended when other treatments no longer provide joint pain relief. Types of joint surgery can include:

- Joint fusion
- Joint replacement (arthroplasty)
- Joint resurfacing
- Osteotomy (reshaping bone near joint)
- Synovectomy (removing inflamed lining of the joint)

Non-surgical

Patients who do not opt for a surgical solution to their pain have many treatment options, including:

- Interventional injections (e.g., steroids)
- Low-impact exercise
- Over-the-counter medications
- Physical therapy
- Weight management

Your orthopedic specialist can work with you to determine if a surgical or non-surgical option is right for you. It's important to weigh the risks and benefits of each option, including surgical recovery time, before choosing a treatment option.



What is joint replacement?

If you have tried other treatments without relief, joint replacement, also called arthroplasty, may be the best treatment option. Arthroplasty is a surgery to replace all or part of a worn out or damaged joint, like ankles, elbows, knees, hips, shoulders and wrists.

There are different types of arthroplasties, depending on the severity of joint damage. In some cases, surgeons may recommend partial joint replacement, which is sometimes referred to as **joint resurfacing**. This method preserves more natural bone and joint structure. In other cases, a **total joint replacement** may be recommended. This method involves the removal of damaged joint surfaces and replacement with artificial components.

When to consider joint replacement surgery

It may be time to consider joint replacement if you have:

- Disabling joint pain, especially at rest
- Tried and failed non-surgical treatment options
- Decreased quality of life from joint pain

We take a comprehensive approach by considering not only your joints, but also your lifestyle and other health factors when determining what treatment options may fit you best. If joint surgery is the best option, your team will walk you through the process from beginning to end. Part of our comprehensive joint care at select facilities involves using the latest robotic surgical technology to achieve optimal outcomes for our patients.

What to expect during and after joint replacement surgery

Arrival and preparation

Before being approved for joint replacement surgery, your physician may order blood tests, EKGs, and other testing or imagery to ensure you're healthy.

If you are approved and scheduled for surgery, your physician will provide pre-op guidance including when to stop eating and drinking before the procedure. Typically, this is eight hours before your scheduled surgery time.

When you arrive at the hospital for your procedure, you'll be checked in and taken to a preoperative area where nurses prepare you for surgery. This includes:

- Reviewing your medical information
- Starting an IV for fluids and medications
- Ensuring everything is ready before you go into the operating room

During the procedure

Once in the operating room, your surgical and anesthesia teams will prepare you for the procedure. You will receive anesthesia to ensure you are comfortable and pain-free during surgery. For joint replacement procedures, this typically involves one of the following approaches:

- General anesthesia, where you are fully asleep during the procedure
- Regional anesthesia, such as a spinal block, which numbs the lower half of your body

In many cases, sedation is also provided, so you remain relaxed or lightly asleep during surgery. These approaches may be used alone or in combination, depending on your individual needs and your care team's recommendations.

During surgery, the surgeon makes an incision to access the joint. Damaged portions of the joint (bone and cartilage) are then removed, and the joint is reconstructed using prosthetic components designed to restore movement and reduce pain.

These implants are designed to create a smooth joint surface that improves mobility and function. The surgical portion of the procedure generally takes a few hours, depending on your individual condition.

Post-op and recovery

After surgery, you'll be taken to a recovery area where your care team will closely monitor you as you wake up. They will:

- Track your vital signs
- Manage pain and discomfort
- Ensure you are stable and recovering safely

Early activity is an important part of the recovery process, and your care team will begin guiding you through your first steps when appropriate.

Patients are often discharged from the hospital the same day after joint replacement surgery.

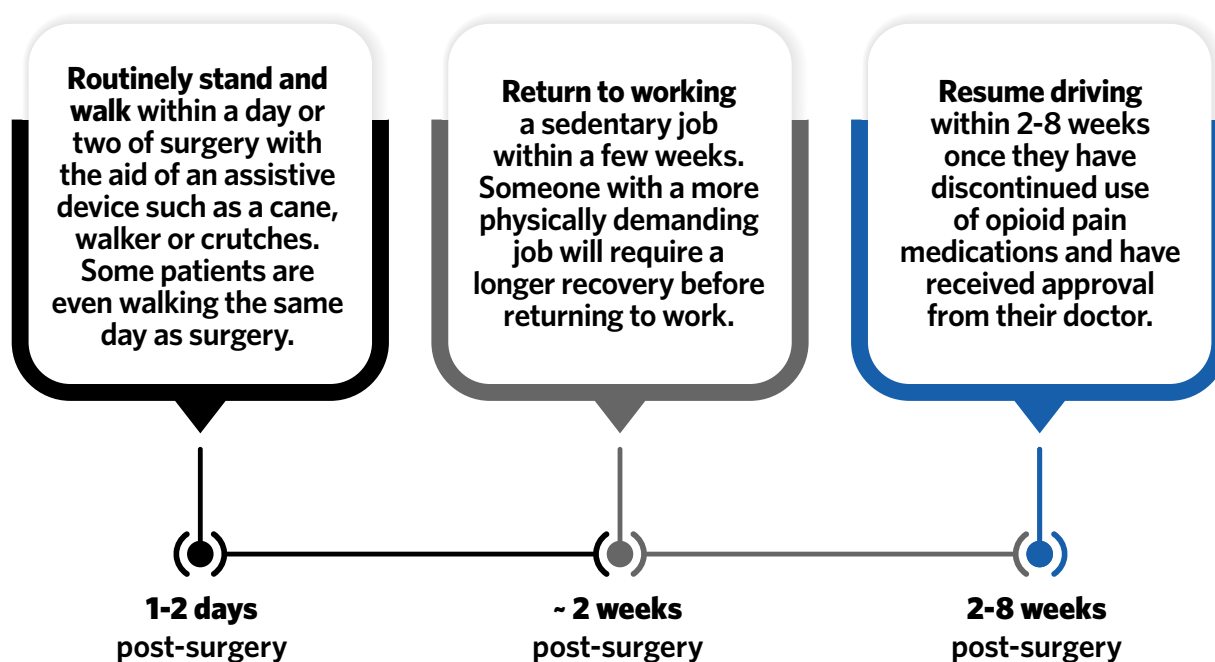
Medications may be prescribed to help prevent pain and blood clots, and patients with ankle, knee or hip replacement may need walkers, canes or crutches to move around.

Recovery time varies by patient and the type of joint replacement, but most joint replacement patients recover in a few months. Typical recovery times for common joint replacements are outlined below.

Hip: Six to 12 weeks | Knee: Three to 12 months | Shoulder: Six to 12 months

For knee, ankle or hip replacements, patients are encouraged to get up and move around about 12 to 24 hours after surgery, usually with assistance like a walker or crutches. It's also recommended that patients move around for about 10 minutes per hour during the days following surgery.

The timeline for joint replacement surgery recovery can look different for everyone. Most people are able to:





Every person's anatomy and situation are unique, so it's important to discuss your specific recovery timeline with your orthopedic surgeon.

Physical therapy is essential after joint replacement surgery. It helps patients move back to their normal level of activity safely. Skipping it can lead to a longer recovery, pain, joint stiffness and a risk of injury. Many patients find they can get back to everyday routines after about six weeks, during which time joint mobility may be limited.

Your care team will guide you through steps to reduce risks like blood clots and support a safe recovery, including movement, medications, therapy and preventive care. The goal is to help you return comfortably and confidently to the activities you enjoy.

Frequently asked questions

Q | How do I know if I need joint replacement?

If joint pain is limiting your activity or daily life and other treatments haven't helped, joint replacement may be an option. An orthopedic specialist can help you decide.

Q | What is the first step in the joint replacement process?

Make an appointment with one of our orthopedic specialists and they can help determine if joint replacement surgery is the right treatment option for you.

Q | What if I'm not ready to consider joint replacement surgery?

If joint replacement isn't your preferred treatment method, you can also find joint pain relief with other options, like interventional injections, low-impact exercise, over-the-counter medications, physical therapy and weight management.

Q | How should I prepare my living space for my recovery?

Remove tripping hazards like loose rugs and cords, create clear walking paths, and ensure good lighting throughout your space. Set up a main living area on one level if possible, keep frequently used items within easy reach, and adjust your bathroom by adding grab bars or a shower chair to reduce fall risk and make daily activities easier.

Q | What technology will be used during the procedure?

Joint replacement surgery uses advanced implants and modern surgical techniques to restore function. Damaged bone and cartilage are replaced with prosthetic components designed to create a smooth, stable joint. Procedures may use minimally invasive techniques and specialized tools to improve precision, and in some cases advanced or robotic-assisted technology may be used at certain facilities to help optimize implant placement.

Q | Am I the right age for joint replacement?

There's no age limit for joint replacement surgery, but the answer depends on several factors that an orthopedic specialist can walk you through.

Implant lifespan: *Artificial joints last between 15-25 years. Will you need revision surgery in the future? These procedures could carry more risk, so most specialists recommend limiting joint replacements to a single operation.*

Activity limitations and quality of life: *Will getting surgery cause more inconvenience or discomfort than your joint pain?*



Ready to find your joint pain solution?

Call 973-798-4777 to schedule an orthopedic appointment at Mountainside Medical Center and learn more about your options.

Why choose us?

We offer a team-based approach to orthopedic care, including hip and knee replacement specialists and board-certified, fellowship-trained orthopedic surgeons.

Whether you're ready to start your joint replacement journey or just gathering more information, our team of specialized professionals is here to assist you.

Our orthopedic services include:

- Specialized Total Joint Center focused on joint replacement care and recovery
- Dedicated nurse navigator for patients
- Joint resurfacing, repair or fusion
- Advanced anterior hip replacement, direct superior hip replacement techniques
- Non-surgical joint pain treatment options, including medication and physical therapy
- Robotic-assisted joint replacement surgery



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