Preparing for Hip Replacement Surgery



There are a number of things you can do to help prepare for surgery and plan ahead for your homecoming. The better prepared you are the less anxious you will be. It has been shown that patients who have a good knowledge and understanding of their surgical procedure and what to expect afterwards, respond better to treatment and rehabilitation.

Patients are often scheduled for pre-surgery tests, like x-rays, blood and urine samples to check your general health status, and to rule out the possibility of an underlying infection. Make sure your doctor knows about any pre-existing conditions and the use of long-term medication.

REDUCE YOUR RISK OF COMPLICATIONS

Risks for developing complications from surgery can be reduced by ensuring you are as healthy as possible before surgery and this will speed up your recovery:

- Try to give up smoking or cut down
- Cut down on alcohol
- Eat a well-balanced diet
- Maintain the correct weight for your height (body mass index – BMI). If you have sufficient time before surgery, losing weight will be a huge help in reducing the load on your hips and knees, as well as your wrists when using crutches. Being overweight and less mobile also increases your risk of developing a clot after surgery
- Make sure your teeth and gums, or any other open wound/sore on your body is free from infection
- Walk and exercise within the limits of your pain. The more active and independent you can remain before surgery, the better your outcome after surgery. Keeping fit with some walking and doing exercises to strengthen your hip muscles and legs as well as your arms and wrists (for walking with crutches) will be a great help to your recovery.

PREPARING YOUR HOME

The prospect of returning home from hospital can be daunting, so preparing your home and asking a family member or friend to stay with you for the first day or two, will allow you to focus simply on your own recovery.

Make a few simple changes around the house to make your life easier on your return such as:

- Remove any loose rugs, as they can be hazardous when you are walking in the house. Tripping or having a fall can damage your new hip joint.
- Make sure you tape down all electrical cords or cables running across the floor to avoid falls
- Stock up on food that will last, to avoid having to make trips to the shops shortly after discharge
- You may need to elevate your legs to reduce swelling during the initial 4 to 6 weeks. This is best accomplished in a recliner chair, or a chair with armrests and foot stool for appropriate leg support. Remember you have to keep your feet below your hip height to avoid bending your hip past 90°
- Prepare a sleeping room on the ground floor, or ensure that you only have to climb the stairs once a day to bed, so have a comfortable chair to rest in during the day downstairs
- Make sure you have a cordless or mobile phone to hand, to make it easier to answer phone calls
- An apron with large pockets is really useful to move things around the house, as you may be using both hands with your crutches
- Plan ahead with meals where possible, stock up with some ready-made meals in the freezer
- Keep everyday kitchen items (tea cups, bowl and plate) handy, between waist and shoulder height, to avoid bending down or reaching up too high – especially avoid using a kitchen step to get to the top of the cupboard.

Special equipment will help to ensure an easier recovery following surgery. Your physical and occupational therapists will recommend equipment for you and will help you and your family in obtaining this equipment, usually rented, following surgery.

Some of this equipment may include:

- Elevated toilet seat, to ensure whilst sitting your knee is not higher than your hip (preventing bending your hip past 90°
- Shower seat/stool makes it safe to wash and not slip
- Handrails and grab bars
- Grasping device (like long tweezers or barbeque tongs) for putting on socks and shoes or picking items off the floor.

Your physical therapist can also help you prepare by prescribing strengthening exercises to be done before surgery. Being stronger prior to surgery is a big benefit and helps in your rehabilitation progress. Your therapist can also teach you exercises that will be done in hospital and how to use crutches in advance. This helps when you may be feeling a little overwhelmed - knowing the dos and don'ts and exercises will give you more confidence.

The information contained in this article is intended as general guidance and information only and should not be relied upon as a basis for planning individual medical care or as a substitute for specialist medical advice in each individual case. ©Co-Kinetic 2019

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