

## Points To Remember About Joint Replacement Surgery

- Joint replacement surgery removes damaged or diseased parts of a joint and replaces them with new, man-made parts.
- The goals of joint replacement surgery are to relieve pain, help the joint work better, and improve walking and other movements.
- Risks of problems after joint replacement surgery are much lower than they used to be.
- An exercise program can reduce joint pain and stiffness.
- Wearing away of the joint surface may become a problem after 15 to 20 years.

## What is joint replacement surgery?

Joint replacement surgery removes damaged or diseased parts of a joint and replaces them with new, man-made parts.

Replacing a joint can reduce pain and help you move and feel better. [Hips](#) and knees are replaced most often. Other joints that can be replaced include the shoulders, fingers, ankles, and elbows.

## Why may joint replacement surgery be needed?

Joints may need to be replaced when they are damaged from:

- [Arthritis](#).
- Years of use.
- Disease.

Your doctor will likely first suggest other treatments to reduce pain and help you move better, such as:

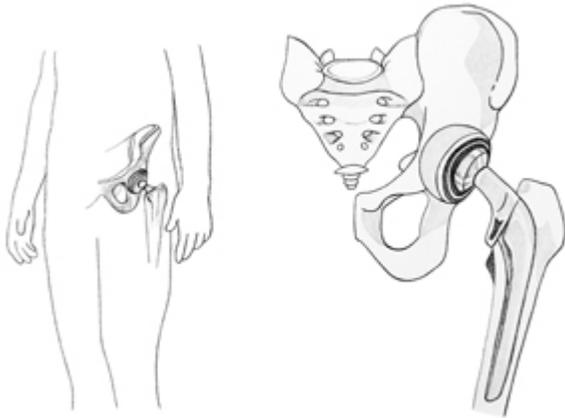
- Walking aids, such as a cane or walker.
- An exercise program.

- Physical therapy.
- Medications.

Sometimes the pain remains and makes daily activities hard to do. In this case, your doctor may order an x-ray to look at the joint. If the x-ray shows damage and your joint hurts, you may need a joint replacement.

## What happens during joint replacement surgery?

During joint replacement your doctors will:



Hip Replacement Location

- Give you medicine so you won't feel pain. The medicine may block the pain only in one part of the body, or it may put your whole body to sleep.
- Replace the damaged joint with a new man-made joint.
- Move you to a recovery room until you are fully awake or the numbness goes away.

## What can I expect after joint replacement surgery?

With knee or [hip](#) surgery, you will probably need to stay in the hospital for a few days. If you are elderly or have additional disabilities, you may then need to spend several weeks in an intermediate-care facility before going home. You and your team of doctors will determine how long you stay in the hospital.

After hip or knee replacement, you will often stand or begin walking the day of surgery. At first, you will walk with a walker or crutches. You may have some temporary pain in the new joint because your muscles are weak from not being used. Also, your body is healing. The pain can be helped with medicines and should end in a few weeks or months.

Physical therapy can begin the day after surgery to help strengthen the muscles around the new joint and help you regain motion in the joint. If you have your shoulder joint replaced, you can usually begin exercising the same day of your surgery! A physical therapist will help you with gentle, range-of-motion exercises. Before you leave the hospital, your therapist will show you how to use a pulley device to help bend and extend your arm.

## What are the complications of joint replacement surgery?

Complications after joint replacement surgery are much lower than they used to be. When problems do occur, most are treatable. Problems could include:

- Infection.
- Blood clots.
- Loosening of the joint.
- Ball of the new joint comes out of its socket.
- Wear on joint replacements.
- Nerve and blood vessel injury.

## For more info

### **U.S. Food and Drug Administration**

Toll free: 888-INFO-FDA (888-463-6332)

Website: <https://www.fda.gov>

[Drugs@FDA](https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cder/daf) at <https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cder/daf>. [Drugs@FDA](https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cder/daf) is a searchable catalog of FDA-approved drug products.

### **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics**

Website: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs>

### **NIH Osteoporosis and Related Bone Diseases ~ National Resource Center**

Website: <https://www.bones.nih.gov>

### **Office of Disease Prevention**

Website: [www.prevention.nih.gov](http://www.prevention.nih.gov)

### **American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons**

Website: <https://www.aaos.org>

**American College of Rheumatology**

Website: <https://www.rheumatology.org>

**Arthritis Foundation**

Website: <https://www.arthritis.org>

If you need more information about available resources in your language or other languages, please visit our webpages below or contact the NIAMS Information Clearinghouse at [NIAMSInfo@mail.nih.gov](mailto:NIAMSInfo@mail.nih.gov).

- [Asian Language Health Information](#)
- [Spanish Language Health Information](#)