

How to Get the Most out of Your Joint Replacement



Hip and knee replacement surgeries are considered to be among the most successful treatments in the history of modern medicine. Because of the high rate of success of these procedures, your quality of life most likely will improve, and you most likely will return to the routine daily activities you performed before joint pain set in.

The majority of people experience significant improvement in pain and regain the ability to walk, climb stairs, get in and out of the car and tie their shoes; however, some people who have a hip or knee replaced are dissatisfied with the results after the procedure. Patient satisfaction after hip and knee replacement surgery is important to surgeons as they strive for high quality and cost-effective care of their patients. **Studies have shown that there are steps you can take before and after surgery to improve the likelihood that you are satisfied with the results.**

How well are you getting around?

One study found that those who were getting around very well prior to hip replacement were less likely to experience meaningful improvement after surgery. In other words, **the less you have to gain, the less happy you will be with your outcome.** If you have severe arthritis, but your activities aren't significantly limited because of it, you may opt to delay surgery. The definition of "significantly limited" is different for everyone; however, it is important to weigh those limitations in your routine activities against the risk of having surgery.

How high are your expectations?

In a recent study, researchers found that **people with high expectations for their hip replacement surgery experienced greater satisfaction.** You should not be afraid to have high expectations following your replacement surgery. You should also realize that there may be certain limitations following surgery. It is important to discuss what your expectations for your new joint are with your surgeon prior to the procedure; however, don't be afraid to "shoot for the stars" in your recovery!

How committed are you to your overall health?

The same study that looked at expectations before surgery also looked at how actively involved people are with their medical treatment and how much they feel in control of their overall health. **Those who take a more active approach to their health are less likely feel their outcome after surgery is out of their control.** The more proactive you are about managing your overall health before hip or knee replacement surgery, the more likely you will have greater satisfaction, better pain relief and better mental health following surgery. Conversely, if you view your overall health as fair or poor, you may experience higher levels of depression and feel less in control of your health and recovery. Additionally, there is an association with a higher risk of dissatisfaction. It is important to be sound of mind *and* body when signing up for surgery. The recovery is not always easy, but the more you put into it, the more you will get out of your joint replacement.



Are people with new knees happier than people with new hips?

Another study compared satisfaction between people who had total hip replacement surgery and those who had total knee replacement surgery. They found that more hip replacement patients were willing to undergo the surgery again (96%) than knee replacement patients (89%). **Overall satisfaction was 89% in the hip replacement group and 81% in the knee replacement group.** People who had hip replacements had higher satisfaction with pain reduction while performing routine daily activities.

Finally, 78% of people who had hip replacements felt their expectations were met compared to 70% of people who had knee replacements. You might hear that a hip replacement is a much easier recovery than a knee replacement, and it's true that people with new knees usually require more physical therapy after surgery. While many hip replacement patients eventually forget about their new joint, knee replacement patients may continue to have an "artificial" feeling in their new joint.

Regardless of the surgical procedure, hip and knee replacement surgeries are highly successful and provide an excellent return of joint function and relief of arthritic pain.

Steps You Can Take to Achieve Happiness after Joint Replacement

If you are considering hip or knee replacement surgery, **here are some general guidelines you can follow to increase the likelihood that you will be satisfied after your surgery.** These can help guide you in your decision-making process.

1. Take a more **active role in your overall health** before surgery. Read the article, "Good Health=Good Recovery." <https://hipknee.aahks.org/good-health-good-recovery-after-joint-surgery/>
2. If you have anxiety/depression, ensure that you're **managing the condition** before surgery.
3. **Reduce or eliminate the use of narcotics** before and after surgery (the more pain medicine you take before surgery, the harder it is to manage your pain after surgery). It is important not to quit "cold-turkey" and for you to **wean off narcotics under the direction of a medical professional.**
4. If you have a small amount of arthritis and are getting around fairly well, continue with non-surgical options for joint pain. Read the article, "Relieving Hip and Knee Pain Without Surgery." <https://hipknee.aahks.org/relieving-hip-and-knee-pain-without-surgery/>
5. Enlist a family member or friend to be your "**joint replacement coach**" to help you through the recovery process.

As always, everyone is different, and you should discuss your personal situation with your surgeon and primary care doctor. Remember that hip and knee replacement are elective procedures (arthritis is not life-threatening), and you want to enter into surgery with a good attitude, overall good health and equipped with the right knowledge to ensure yourself an excellent outcome.

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