

Will my Artificial Joint Set off Airport Security Metal Detectors?



Yes, but here's the one thing to know:

Belt buckles, key chains and smartphones may set off sensitive metal detectors at airport security checkpoints. Many commonly used orthopaedic implants may also set off the metal detectors. **Over 90% of implanted total hip and knee arthroplasty devices will set off airport metal detectors.**¹ Many implants now include ceramic and plastic materials in addition to metal, and the metal will still likely cause an alarm in the metal detector.

A card or note from your physician is not needed for identification of these type of implants.

If you or a family member has a metal implant, simply inform the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) officer before screening begins that you've had a hip or knee replacement. Point to the location on your leg where you have the implant. Passengers can use the [TSA's Notification Card](#) to communicate discreetly with security officers if they prefer.

Telling the TSA officer or showing this card will not exempt a passenger from the screening. Instead, you'll be instructed to go through the body scan machine. Many people prefer to be screened by the body scan (X-ray machine) to reduce the likelihood of a pat-down being necessary. If you prefer not to go through the body scan machine, you can opt for the pat-down. Even if you go through the body scan machine, the TSA officer may still need to pat the area around your joint.

We recommend allowing additional time for airport screening when traveling with a joint replacement to help ensure a more pleasant travel experience.

TSA Passenger Support

TSA has a "TSA Cares" hotline that you can use to find out more about screenings for special circumstances. Contact them with any further questions or to schedule a Passenger Support Specialist who can help you at the airport. **Phone** (855) 787-2227 or **email** TSA-ContactCenter@tsa.dhs.gov.

More Resources

- Video from AAHKS showing what to do <https://hipknee.aahks.org/airport-security>
- TSA information on metal implants <http://www.tsa.gov/travel/special-procedures>
- TSA Notification Card http://www.tsa.gov/sites/default/files/disability_notification_cards.pdf
- 1. Johnson AJ, Naziri Q, Hooper HA, Mont MA. Detection of total hip prostheses at airport security checkpoints: how has heightened security affected patients? J Bone Joint Surg Am 94(7): e44, 2012



Scan this with your phone to connect to more articles and videos on hip and knee care.

*This article has been written and peer reviewed by the AAHKS Patient and Public Relations Committee and the AAHKS Evidence Based Medicine Committee. Links to these pages or content used from the articles must be given proper citation to the American Association of Hip and Knee Surgeons.
Revised 2018*