

Shoulder Joint Replacement

How to prepare and what to expect

This handout for UW Medicine patients explains how to prepare and what to expect when having shoulder joint replacement surgery. Talk with your surgeon about your personal care plan.

Before Surgery

- Do everything on the attached “Surgery Safety Checklist” to ensure that your surgery has the best outcome.
- If you have any sores, rashes, or scratches anywhere on your body, or any other changes in your health, please call us at 206.598.4288 as soon as you can.
- Arrange for friends or family members who will:
 - Help you leave the hospital after surgery
 - Drive you home in a car or ride with you in a taxi
 - Watch over you for 1 week after surgery

Day of Surgery

- Check in at the Surgical Pavilion at the time you were given. Go to Surgery Reception on the 2nd floor.

After you check in:

- We will take you to the pre-anesthesia area and help get you ready for surgery.
- You will need to remove any rings on the hand on the side of your surgery. Give all valuables to a family member, friend, or hospital staff for safekeeping.
- We will ask you to change into a surgical gown.
- We will place an *intravenous* (IV) line into a vein in your arm. This line is used to give you medicines and fluids during surgery.
- The surgical team and the anesthesiologist will meet with you and answer any questions you have. They will also ask you to confirm the type and site of the surgery. This is for your safety.
- We will show your family and friends to the waiting area.



On the day of your surgery, go to the Surgical Pavilion. Check in at the Surgery Reception desk on the 2nd floor.

- You will be taken to the operating room. There, you will receive *general anesthetic* (medicine to make you sleep) and have your surgery.

After Surgery

- You will be in the recovery room for 1 to 2 hours.
- While you are in recovery, we will take an X-ray of your new shoulder.
- When the nurses have determined that you are awake and your condition is stable, they will invite a family member to visit you in the recovery room.
- When your surgeon says you are ready, we will move you to a room in the hospital.
- Most patients are able to go home by the 1st day after surgery.

Pain Control

For the first few hours after surgery, you will most likely use a PCA (*patient-controlled analgesia*) device. A PCA allows you to give yourself pain medicine through your IV. You will use the PCA until you can take medicines by mouth. This is usually in the evening on the day of your surgery.

Your Hospital Stay

Preventing Falls

Your risk for falling increases when you are a patient in the hospital. And, shoulder surgery patients tend to have a higher risk for falling. Falls can cause serious injuries, that sometimes can be fatal.

Help us keep you safe by using your call light when you need to get out of your bed or chair. We are never too busy to help you!

Activities

Our goal is to have you start your shoulder exercises and get out of bed as soon as you can. Your care team will help you with your shoulder exercises and show you how to do them on your own. Before you leave the hospital, make sure you understand and are able to do all of your exercises.

Medicines for Pain Control

We prefer to give prescription pain medicine for only a short time after surgery. These medicines can delay your recovery if you take them too long. For pain control, you will take acetaminophen (Tylenol), anti-inflammatory medicines, and/or prescription medicines based on your needs.

Discharge from the Hospital

Most people who have this surgery are ready to go home after 1 night in the hospital. Your discharge day depends on how well you can move your shoulder, how your exercises are going, and how you are feeling.

When you are ready for discharge:

- A responsible adult must help you leave the hospital and take you home. This person can drive you in their car or ride with you in a taxi. **You may not drive yourself home, or ride on a bus or shuttle.**
- A responsible adult will also need to watch over you for 1 week after surgery.

Self-care at Home

Incision Care

For 2 weeks:

- Keep your incision clean and dry. Do not take a bath, sit in a hot tub or pool, or cover your incision with water. Cover the bandage with plastic when you take a shower.
- If the bandage over your incision gets wet or dirty, replace it with a sterile dry dressing. Your hospital team may provide supplies at discharge, or you can buy them at your local drugstore.
- Keep your armpit area clean and dry. Do not apply deodorants, antiperspirants, or creams to your underarm.

Visit your surgeon or primary care provider (PCP) 2 weeks after your surgery. At this visit, they will:

- Check your incision to make sure it is healing well
- Remove staples if they were used to close your incision
- Apply white tape called Steri-strips over your incision

If you have any questions or problems with your incision, call your surgical team (see “Who to Call” on page 5).

Medicines

- If you are taking prescription pain medicine, you will *taper* (slowly use less of) your medicine so that you are no longer taking it by 2 to 3 weeks after surgery. Talk with your doctor or nurse about how to taper your doses. If you were taking prescription pain medicine before surgery, stay in close contact with your PCP or pain doctor.
- For pain relief during the first 6 weeks after surgery, we usually advise taking Tylenol (acetaminophen) along with a *nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug* (NSAID) such as ibuprofen (Motrin and other brands) or naproxen (Aleve and other brands).
- Do **not** take NSAIDs if you have ever had:
 - An allergic reaction to NSAIDs
 - Bleeding or *gastrointestinal* (digestive system) problems
 - Renal (kidney) problems

- Do **not** take more than 3,000 mg of Tylenol each day.
- If you have questions or concerns about any of your medicines, talk with your PCP or your surgical team.

Exercises

The first 6 weeks after surgery are very important to your recovery. During this time, we usually use stretching exercises to make sure your shoulder stays flexible.

Most often, the goal of these exercises is to be able to move your arms to at least a 150-degree angle away from your body, and to be able to hold that position. This is called 150 degrees *forward elevation*. (When your arms are at zero degrees, they are down by your side. When your arms are at 180 degrees, they are straight above your head, as if you are reaching toward the ceiling.)

We will teach you 1 or more of the 3 exercises shown below to help you meet this goal. The exercises are the *supine stretch*, the *forward lean*, and the *pulley* (see photos below).



Supine stretch



Pulley



Forward lean

Ask a family member or friend to measure your range of motion several times a week to make sure you are on track. Ask them to take a photo from the side while you are doing your exercises. Send the photo to your surgeon at the email address they provide.

Your surgeon may also refer you to a physical therapist.

For Your Safety and Healing

- Please follow the exercise plan we gave you. Do **not** try to do more activities than we advised. After surgery, your balance and ability to do simple activities may not be back to normal. This means your risk for falls and other injuries is higher.
- For **6 weeks** after shoulder joint replacement surgery:
 - Do **not** drive.
 - When using the arm on the side of your surgery, do **not** lift anything that weighs more than a cup of coffee.
- It is OK to wear a sling when you are concerned about your arm getting bumped, or to rest your arm.

Follow-up

Make sure you set up these appointments:

- A visit with your doctor at 2 weeks to remove your staples or sutures
- A follow-up visit with your surgeon at 6 weeks after your surgery

At the 6-week follow-up visit, your surgeon will check your incision and your range of motion. They will also take X-rays of your shoulder to make sure healing is going well.

At this visit, you will most likely learn new exercises to help strengthen and stretch your shoulder. If your shoulder is stiff, your surgeon may:

- Refer you to a physical therapist
- Advise you to have a procedure that involves moving your shoulder (*manipulation*) while you are under anesthesia

Who to Call

If you have any questions about your surgery, or any concerns before or after your hospital stay:

- Weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.: Call the Bone and Joint Surgery Center at 206.598.4288.
- After hours and on weekends and holidays: Call 206.598.6190 and ask to page the orthopaedist on call.

If you have an urgent care need, call 911.

Thank you for choosing UW Medicine for your healthcare needs.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

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After hours and on weekends and holidays, call 206.598.6190 and ask to page the orthopaedist on call.