

Recovering After Hip Replacement

A patient guide

MR TOFUNMI ONI · CONSULTANT ORTHOPAEDIC SURGEON · HIP & KNEE

A hip replacement is one of the most reliable operations in modern surgery, and most people are pleasantly surprised by how quickly they begin to feel like themselves again. Recovery is a gradual process rather than a single moment, and knowing roughly what to expect helps you pace yourself. The timings here are a general guide. Your own progress may be a little faster or slower, and that is normal.

The first days

You will be up and walking with the physiotherapists very soon after surgery, usually with a frame or crutches. Walking little and often is far better than long spells on your feet, and resting between walks is part of the plan, not a setback. Some swelling and bruising around the hip and down the leg is expected and settles over the following weeks. Take your pain relief as advised so that you can move comfortably, since comfort is what allows you to do your exercises.

Looking after your wound

Keep the dressing clean and dry and follow the advice you are given about when it can be changed or removed. A little redness along the wound is normal in the early days. Contact the practice if the wound becomes increasingly red, hot or swollen, or starts to leak fluid, or if you feel feverish, as these can be signs of an infection that is easily treated when caught early.

Protecting your new hip

For the first six weeks or so it is sensible to avoid certain positions while the tissues around the new joint heal. As a general rule, try not to bend the hip up past a right angle, do not cross your legs, and avoid twisting on the leg. Practical habits help, such as sitting on a higher chair, keeping out of low soft sofas, and sleeping on your back or with a pillow between your knees if you turn onto your side. Mr Oni will tell you if your particular operation means these precautions do not apply to you.

Getting back to normal

Many people are walking with a stick by two to three weeks and managing without aids by around six weeks, though this varies. You can usually return to driving once you can sit comfortably, perform an emergency stop without hesitation, and are off strong pain medication, which is often around six weeks. Returning to work depends on the job, from a couple of weeks for desk based roles to longer for physical work. The hip continues to strengthen and improve for many months, so keep up your exercises and stay active.

Keeping the blood moving

A small risk after any major leg surgery is a blood clot. Staying mobile, doing your ankle exercises, and keeping well hydrated all reduce this risk, and you may be given medication or stockings to help.

Call the practice straight away if: you notice calf pain or swelling that is new or on one side, sudden breathlessness or chest pain, or signs of a wound infection. These are uncommon, but they are worth acting on quickly.

Mr Tofunmi Oni · libby.gibbs@horder.co.uk · **01892 362736**

This guide gives general information and is not a substitute for the personalised advice of Mr Oni and your physiotherapist. If you are worried about your symptoms or your recovery, please contact the practice.