

Returning to Daily Life After Surgery

Driving, work, travel and activity

MR TOFUNMI ONI · CONSULTANT ORTHOPAEDIC SURGEON · HIP & KNEE

One of the most common questions after a hip or knee replacement is simply, when can I get back to normal? This guide gives general timings for the things people ask about most. They are a guide rather than a rule, since everyone heals at their own pace, and your own team will tailor the advice to you.

Driving

You can usually return to driving once you can sit comfortably, move the leg freely, and perform an emergency stop firmly and without hesitation, while being off strong pain medication. For many people that is around six weeks, and sometimes a little longer for a right knee or hip because of the pedals. It is worth telling your insurer that you have had surgery, and the deciding factor is always whether you could stop safely in an emergency.

Work

When you can go back depends mostly on what your work involves. Many people in desk based jobs feel ready within two to four weeks, often easing in with shorter days or some time working from home at first. Jobs with standing, lifting or being on your feet take longer, sometimes two to three months. There is no prize for rushing, and going back too soon often sets people back.

Travel and flying

Short local trips are fine as soon as you are comfortable as a passenger. For longer journeys and flights it is generally advised to wait several weeks, partly because sitting still for a long time raises the small risk of a blood clot in the early period. On any long journey, keep your ankles moving, stay hydrated, and get up and walk when you can. If you have a trip planned, mention it and the practice will give you advice for your situation.

Activity, exercise and sport

Staying active is good for your new joint. Walking, swimming, cycling and similar low impact activities are encouraged and can usually be built up over the first weeks and months. Higher impact activities such as running and contact sport put more load through a replacement, and while some people return to them, it is worth a conversation first. The general aim is a joint that lets you do the things you enjoy comfortably, for as long as possible.

Everyday life

Normal daily activities return gradually, and that includes a return to intimacy when you feel comfortable, usually within a few weeks, taking care with extreme positions in the early period after a hip in particular. If you are unsure about any specific activity, please just ask. The practice would always rather you checked.

When in doubt, ask: If an activity matters to you and you are not sure it is safe yet, contact the practice before you do it.

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.