

Preparing for Your Hip or Knee Replacement

A patient guide

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Deciding to have a hip or knee replacement is a big step, and a little preparation makes the whole thing feel calmer and tends to lead to a smoother recovery. This guide walks you through the weeks before your operation so you know what to do and what to expect. If anything here raises a question, please ask. No question is too small.

Getting yourself ready

The fitter you are going into surgery, the more quickly your body tends to bounce back afterwards. In the weeks beforehand it helps to keep moving within the limits of your pain, to eat well, and to stay hydrated. Gentle activity such as walking, swimming or cycling keeps the muscles around the joint working, and stronger muscles give you a head start with your rehabilitation. If you smoke, stopping before surgery genuinely improves healing and lowers your risk of complications, and the practice can point you towards support if that would help. If you are carrying extra weight, even a small reduction eases the load on the joint.

Simple exercises before surgery

You do not need a gym. A few minutes, two or three times a day, is plenty. Move gently and stop short of sharp pain.

- **Ankle pumps.** Lying or sitting, point your toes away and then back towards you. This keeps the blood moving in your legs.
- **Thigh squeezes.** Tighten the muscle on the front of your thigh, pressing the back of your knee down, hold for five seconds, then relax.
- **Sit to stand.** From a firm chair, stand up and sit down slowly a few times, using your arms only as much as you need. This builds the strength you will rely on straight after surgery.

Getting your home ready

A few small changes at home make the first weeks much easier. Clear a simple path through the rooms you use most and move trailing cables and loose rugs out of the way, since they are easy to trip on when you are using a stick or crutches. Set up a comfortable chair with arms and a firm seat, keep the things you use often within easy reach, and think about meals you can prepare with little standing. If you live alone, it is worth arranging for someone to be around for the first few days.

What to bring on the day

Pack light and comfortable. Loose clothing, flat well fitting slippers or shoes, your dressing gown, a list of your usual medicines, your glasses or hearing aids, and a phone charger cover most needs. Bring any walking aids you already use. The team will tell you when to stop eating and drinking before your admission, and which of your regular medicines to take that morning.

The day of your operation

When you arrive you will be welcomed by the ward team and seen by Mr Oni and the anaesthetist, who will go through the plan and answer any last questions. Most hip and knee replacements are done under a spinal anaesthetic, often with light sedation, which is gentle on the body and helps with pain relief afterwards. The operation itself usually takes between one and two hours. You will be encouraged to get up and moving with the physiotherapists on the same day or the morning after, because early movement is one of the best things for your recovery.

Before you come in: If you become unwell, develop a temperature, or notice a break in the skin or any infection near the joint, please let the practice know before your admission. It may be safer to wait until you are well.

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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.