

Preparing for your Shoulder Replacement



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Preparations for the days and weeks prior to your procedure

- **Obtain preoperative labs, xrays, EKGs, and medical clearance** as advised by your surgeon or other physician. You may need an evaluation and other tests from a cardiologist in addition to your primary doctor.
- **Schedule a dental exam** and complete any needed dental procedures prior to your surgery. Dental procedures introduce bacteria to your bloodstream and may cause you to be at higher risk of a post-surgical infection.
- **Discontinue use of aspirin and NSAIDs** (ibuprofen, Advil, Motrin, naproxen, Aleve) 10 days prior to your planned surgery. These medications may cause increased bleeding during the operation or postoperative period. If aspirin, Plavix, Coumadin or another blood-thinning drug is prescribed for a specific health condition, please discuss with your physician. There are exceptions to this guideline, so please ask if you are unsure. Often, you may resume taking these medications the first day following surgery.

- **Decrease smoking/nicotine use.** Smoking and nicotine use impair postoperative healing and increase risks of various complications, including infection and increased pain, related to surgery and anesthesia.
- Discontinue herbal supplements ten days prior to surgery, as these may interact unpredictably with anesthesia medications.

Arrangements for the day of surgery and your time in the hospital

- Sage West surgery department should contact you the day before your surgery to confirm the time of your procedure and when you are expected to arrive at the hospital. If you have not heard from the surgical staff by 3PM on the day preceding your procedure, please contact Fremont Orthopaedics.
- **Nothing to eat or drink past midnight the evening prior to surgery**, unless advised otherwise. You may take daily medications with sips of water only.

- **Diabetic patients:** please do not take insulin or oral hypoglycemic meds the day of surgery.
- The evening before or the morning of your surgery shower and wash your operative arm with gentle soap. Avoid harsh scrubbing.
- DO NOT SHAVE the operative area.
- Wear glasses rather than contacts; leave jewelry and valuables at home.
- Most patients will spend 1-2 nights in the hospital following shoulder replacement. It is best to plan to spend at least 2 nights in the hospital. During your hospital stay you will see your surgeon each day. The nursing and physical therapy staff will work with you to obtain adequate pain control and early mobilization. You will be educated about your surgical incision care, medications, rehabilitation plan, and precautions to protect your new shoulder joint. You will not be allowed to drive yourself home from the hospital following discharge. A responsible adult should be present at the time of your discharge to participate in teaching by the nursing staff and to drive you home.

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- You will likely receive a prescription for pain medication upon discharge from the hospital. This prescription can be filled by the adult accompanying you while you are in the hospital.
- After surgery, your shoulder incisions will be covered with a clear dressing that is temporarily glued to the skin. Do not remove this dressing, or allow anyone else to remove it. Your physician will remove it two weeks after surgery. You can shower with this dressing in place.
- **Bring a loose-fitting button-down or zippered shirt**, as this will be much easier to put on your operative arm when you are ready to be discharged home.
- Using only one arm is a significant disruption in daily life. You should arrange to have an **adult caregiver available the majority of the first week after surgery**. Initially, you will need help with dressing, bathing, cooking, and bandage changes. After this time, patients become remarkably smoother and more efficient performing tasks with one arm independently.
- You will be able to eat and drink what you feel like after surgery. We recommend that you start “little and light” with foods such as broth, crackers, toast, Jello, juice, and soda, as the anesthesia medications may cause your stomach to be upset. If you are tolerating light foods well you may progress to eating whatever feels good.
- **During the entire time you are taking narcotic medication you should not drive, drink alcohol or be responsible for tasks that require judgment, coordination, insight, or short term memory, i.e. operating heavy power machinery, childcare, legal/financial decisionmaking.**
- You will see the surgeon for **your first postoperative appointment 1.5-2 weeks following surgery**. At this time, the clear dressing and stitches are usually removed from your incisions. Fremont Orthopaedics will schedule your followup appointment prior to your surgery.
- Following shoulder replacement, the focus for the **initial 2-3 postoperative months is to regain motion in the shoulder joint**. Your surgeon will direct you in what to do and what to avoid through this process. Once motion has been regained then strengthening will be added. If needed, a physical therapist will also help with this process beginning roughly two weeks following your shoulder replacement.

Anticipating your rehabilitation needs after surgery

- Activity restrictions following shoulder surgery are quite strict in order to allow the repaired tissues to heal. **Typically, you will not be allowed to carry anything, lift anything, or move your arm side to side with your operative arm for at least 6 weeks.** This means that you will be performing activities of daily living with the use of one arm. Prior to surgery, it is helpful to anticipate this by arranging your most commonly used items in the kitchen, bedroom, and bathroom in easy to reach places. You may also want to identify items of clothing that will be easier to dress in with one usable arm.
- Most shoulder replacement surgeries will require the patient to wear a **shoulder sling nearly 24 hours a day for 2-3 weeks after surgery**.
- **For the first 3-7 days following surgery, we will want you to spend several 30-40 minute sessions a day icing your surgical shoulder.** This will help to control postoperative swelling and pain. It is easiest to apply ice in a form that will mold to your shoulder, i.e. blue gel ice packs or frozen bags of vegetables. Never apply ice to bare skin. Circulating cold water machines are very helpful, but may be costly. Some patients are able to borrow one from a friend or family member.
- Return to work and following these procedures is patient specific. Most patients find that the **first 6 weeks after surgery are largely dedicated to their rehabilitation.** Patients generally make significant functional gains in the first 6 weeks to 3 months and continue to experience improvements for 6-12+ months following joint replacement.

Questions or Concerns:

Should you develop any new health issues prior to your surgery or if you have further questions or concerns, please call Fremont Orthopaedics at (307)332-9720.

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