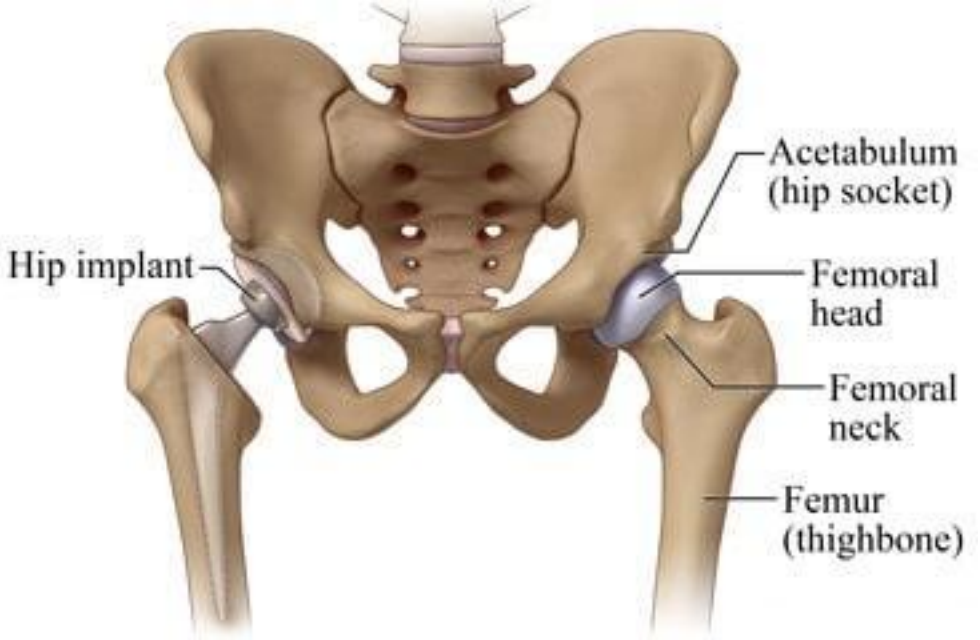
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Hip Replacement Surgery (Anterior): What to Expect at Home

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Your Recovery



Hip replacement surgery replaces the worn parts of your hip joint. After surgery, you will use crutches or a walker. You will need someone to help you at home for a few days or weeks or until you have more energy and can move around better.

You will go home with a bandage and stitches, staples, skin glue, or tape strips. You can remove the bandage when your doctor tells you to. If you have stitches or staples, your doctor will remove them about 2 weeks after your surgery. Glue or tape strips will fall off on their own over time.

You may have some mild pain and swelling after surgery. Your doctor may give you medicine for the pain.

You will keep doing the physical therapy you started in the hospital. The better you do with your exercises, the sooner you will get your strength and movement back.

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Your doctor will tell you when you can go back to work or other activities. This will depend on what type of work and activities you do.
This care sheet gives you a general idea about how long it will take for you to recover. But each person recovers at a different pace. Follow the steps below to get better as quickly as possible.

How can you care for yourself at home?

Activity

- For the first few months, your doctor may want you to avoid things that could dislocate your hip. If so, your therapist may suggest ideas such as:
    - Do not turn your leg too far out to the side. Keep your toes pointing forward or slightly in.
    - Do not step backward or bend backward.
    - Do not cross your legs.
- Go slowly when you climb stairs. Make sure the lights are on, and have someone watch you, if possible. When you climb stairs:
    - Step up first with your unaffected leg. Then bring the affected leg up to the same step. Bring your crutches or cane up.
    - To go down stairs, reverse the order. First, put your crutches or cane on the lower step. Then bring the affected leg down to that step. Finally, step down with the unaffected leg.
- You can ride in a car, but stop at least once every hour to get out and walk around.
- Rest when you feel tired. You may take a nap, but don't stay in bed all day.
- Work with your physical therapist to learn the best way to exercise.
- You may use crutches or a walker for a couple of weeks, and then switch to a cane.
- Try not to sit for too long at one time. You will feel less stiff if you take a short walk about every hour.
- Ask your doctor when you can drive again.

- Ask your doctor when it is okay for you to have sex.

Diet

- You can eat your normal diet. Your doctor may recommend that you take iron and vitamin supplements.
- Eat healthy foods, and watch your portion sizes. Try to stay at a weight that's healthy for you. Too much weight puts more stress on your new hip joint.
- If your bowel movements are not regular right after surgery, try to avoid constipation and straining. Drink plenty of water. Your doctor may suggest fiber, a stool softener, or a mild laxative.

Medicines

- Be safe with medicines. Read and follow all instructions on the label.
    - If the doctor gave you a prescription medicine for pain, take it as prescribed.
    - If you are not taking a prescription pain medicine, ask your doctor if you can take an over-the-counter medicine.
    - Store your prescription pain medicines where no one else can get to them. When you are done using them, dispose of them quickly and safely. Your local pharmacy or hospital may have a drop-off site.
- If your doctor prescribed antibiotics, take them as directed. Do not stop taking them just because you feel better. You need to take the full course of antibiotics.
- Your doctor will tell you if and when you can restart your medicines. You will also get instructions about taking any new medicines.
- If you stopped taking aspirin or some other blood thinner, your doctor will tell you when to start taking it again.
- Your doctor may give you a blood-thinning medicine to prevent blood clots for a few weeks after surgery. Be sure you get instructions about how to take your medicine safely. Blood thinners can cause serious bleeding problems.

This medicine could be in pill form or as a shot (injection). If a shot is necessary, your doctor will tell you how to do this.

Incision care

- If your doctor told you how to care for your cut (incision), follow your doctor's instructions.
- You will have a dressing over the cut. A dressing helps the incision heal and protects it. Your doctor will tell you how to take care of this.
- If you did not get instructions, follow this general advice:
    - If you have strips of tape on the cut, leave the tape on until it falls off.
    - If you have stitches or staples, your doctor will tell you when to come back to have them removed.
    - If you have skin glue on the cut, leave it on until it falls off. Skin glue is also called liquid stitches.
    - Change the bandage every day.
    - Wash the area daily with warm water, and pat it dry. Don't use hydrogen peroxide or alcohol. They can slow healing.
    - You may cover the area with a gauze bandage if it oozes fluid or rubs against clothing.
    - You may shower 24 to 48 hours after surgery. Pat the incision dry. Don't swim or take a bath for the first 2 weeks, or until your doctor tells you it is okay.

Exercise

- Your physical therapist will teach you exercises to do at home. Always do them as your therapist tells you.
- Avoid activities where you might fall.

Ice and elevation

- For pain, put ice or a cold pack on the area for 10 to 20 minutes at a time. Try to do this every 1 to 2 hours (when you are awake). Put a thin cloth between the ice and your skin. If your doctor recommended cold therapy using a portable machine, follow the instructions that came with the machine.
- Your ankle may swell for a few weeks after hip surgery. Prop up your ankle when you ice your hip or anytime you sit or lie down. Try to keep it above the level of your heart. This will help reduce swelling.

Other instructions

- Wear compression stockings if your doctor told you to. These may help to prevent blood clots. Your doctor will tell you how long you need to keep wearing the compression stockings.
- Try to prevent falls. To avoid falling:
    - Arrange furniture so that you will not trip on it.
    - Get rid of throw rugs, and move electrical cords out of the way.
    - Put grab bars in showers and bathtubs.
    - Install and use handrails on stairways.
    - Wear shoes with sturdy, flat soles. Don't wear socks without shoes on smooth floors, such as wood.
    - Walk only in areas with plenty of light.
    - Try to avoid icy or snowy sidewalks. Choose shoes with good traction, or consider using traction devices that attach to your shoes.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and contact your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

When should you call for help?

Call 911 anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You passed out (lost consciousness).

- You have sudden chest pain and shortness of breath, or you cough up blood.
- You have severe trouble breathing.

Contact your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have signs that your hip may be dislocated, including:
    - Severe pain and not being able to stand.
    - A crooked leg that looks like your hip is out of position.
    - Not being able to bend or straighten your leg.
- Your leg or foot is cool or pale or changes color.
- You have tingling, weakness, or numbness in your leg or foot.
- You have symptoms of a blood clot, such as:
    - Pain in your calf, back of the knee, thigh, or groin.
    - Swelling in your leg or groin.
    - A color change on the leg or groin. The skin may be reddish or purplish.
- You have pain that does not get better after you take pain medicine.
- You have loose stitches, or your incision comes open.
- You are bleeding from the incision.
- You have symptoms of infection, such as:
    - Increased pain, swelling, warmth, or redness.
    - Red streaks leading from the incision.
    - Pus draining from the incision.
    - A fever.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You do not have a bowel movement after taking a laxative.
- You do not get better as expected.