

here is your guide to

# Total Shoulder Replacement



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# Total Shoulder Replacement

Shoulder replacement surgery or arthroplasty uses implants to resurface and replace the bones in the joint, re-creating the smooth gliding surfaces that were once intact.

In total shoulder surgery, an incision is made on the front of the shoulder to gain access to the joint. The damaged cartilage is removed to allow for the



replacement implants, which are made from a biocompatible (body friendly) metal alloy and polyethylene (plastic).

Total shoulder replacement surgery is performed while you are under anesthesia, which your physician will explain to you before your surgery.

Your surgery will last approximately 1 1/2 - 2 hours. Preoperative care and time spent in the recovery room can add an additional 2- 3 hours before you are back in your hospital room.

## Complications

While uncommon, complications can occur during and after surgery. Some complications include infection, implant breakage, nerve damage, and fracture, any of which can require additional surgery. Although implant surgery is extremely successful in most cases, some patients still experience pain and stiffness. No implant will last forever, and the patient's post-surgical activities can affect the longevity of the implant. Be sure to discuss these and other risks with your surgeon.

There are many things that your surgeon may do to minimize the potential for complications. Your surgeon may have you see a medical physician before surgery to obtain tests. You may also need to have your dental work up to date and may be shown how to prepare your home to assist in your recovery.

## After Surgery

After surgery, you will probably be hospitalized for 1-3 days. The day after surgery, the bandages are removed and you will begin conservative physical therapy to restore motion and promote blood flow to your joint. You will wear a sling for up to 6 weeks after surgery to protect the soft tissues in your shoulder while they are healing. During this time, a physical therapist will teach you a variety of stretching exercises that will help restore motion to your shoulder. Many patients are prescribed additional exercises that will need to be performed 3- 4 times a day for brief 10 -15 minute sessions. You will be able to perform these exercises in your home, without the assistance of a physical therapist.

As you regain shoulder motion, you may start using weights or large rubber bands in your physical therapy to help build strength. Your doctor will determine the condition of your shoulder before prescribing strengthening exercises.

## Recovery

Patients with total shoulder replacement typically require many weeks before returning to any type of lifting or repetitive movement activities. Driving can normally be resumed four weeks after surgery, but only if your doctor indicates and you are not taking any pain medication. Talk to your doctor before participating in an activity that may place excess stress or movement on your shoulder.

Every person's recovery time will vary, but most people should be able to drive in 2–6 weeks, garden in two months, golf in three months, and play tennis in six months. Your surgeon will tell you when you can return to these activities and will also tell you which activities to avoid.

## Is total shoulder replacement surgery only for people with osteoarthritis?

There are several indications for total shoulder replacement surgery including rheumatoid arthritis, avascular necrosis (lack of blood supply that leads to bone death), bone fracture, and trauma that are not treatable by other methods.

## What type of rehabilitation can I expect following surgery?

Exercise is necessary for proper healing. Most doctors will recommend therapy for gentle arm movements 24–48 hours after surgery. Therapy will begin in the hospital and continue after discharge for approximately 6–8 weeks. A regular exercise

program at home to promote strengthening and mobility will continue up to 12 months after surgery.

## What type of follow-up will I need with my new shoulder?

Your doctor will set a follow-up schedule for the first year after surgery to evaluate your progress. You will be seen every year or two thereafter. Complications can occur with implants, so seeing your doctor when you notice a change in symptoms can assist in evaluating any changes that may occur with your new joint.

## Summary

We know the decision to have surgery is sometimes difficult. We hope this brochure has helped you understand some of the basics of total shoulder replacement surgery so that you can make the best decision for yourself.

Hundreds of thousands of others have made this choice, allowing them to return to more active lifestyles. This brochure is not intended to replace the experience and counsel of your orthopedic surgeon.

If you have any further questions, please speak with your orthopedic surgeon. If you do not have an orthopaedic surgeon, please refer to the doctor listings provided in this brochure.