



Laura Sciaroni MD
Orthopedic Surgery and Sports Medicine
www.drsciaroni.com

Preparing for Knee Replacement Surgery

If you and your orthopaedic surgeon have decided that you are a good candidate for knee replacement, you'll need several weeks to prepare, both physically and psychologically. By planning ahead, you can help ensure a smooth surgery and a speedy recovery.

Understand the procedure

Talk to your doctor. Learn what to expect before, during and after surgery. The more you know, the better you will be able to face the challenges and changes that joint replacement surgery will make in your life. Don't ever hesitate to ask questions, voice concerns or speak up when you do not understand.

Assemble your personal and medical information

During the weeks before your surgery, many people will be asking about your insurance coverage, medical history and legal arrangements. You may feel that you are answering the same questions over and over again, but this redundancy is necessary to meet quality and insurance guidelines, and reduce the risk of errors. If you have everything written down, you can reduce your frustration and speed the process. Be sure to include the following information:

- A designated family member or friend as your primary contact to receive information from the doctor and disseminate it to other family members and friends.
- A list of all the doctors you currently see and your reasons for seeing them. Provide names, addresses and phone numbers.
- A list of medical conditions and all previous operations, including those that are not bone-and-joint operations.
- A list of all the medications you currently take on a regular basis. Copy the name of the medication, the dosage and the frequency (daily, twice a day, etc.) from the prescription bottle. Don't forget to include vitamin and mineral supplements or other over-the-counter medications you take regularly. Your



doctor may advise you to stop taking certain medications or supplements a week or two before your surgery.

- A list of any allergies or adverse reactions you've had to drugs or anesthesia in the past. Provide the name of the drug, why you were taking it, a description of your reaction and when this happened.
- Any dietary restrictions or other health problems
- A list of your insurance coverages, including the name of the insurance company, the plan or group number and contact information. Be sure to bring your insurance cards to the hospital with you.
- Information about any legal arrangements you've made, such as a living will or durable power of attorney. Bring a copy of the documents with you to the hospital.

Get in shape for surgery

The physical preparations you make can affect both the outcome of the surgery and your recovery time. Most of these suggestions are common sense, although some may surprise you.

- If you smoke, cut down or quit. Smoking changes blood flow, delays healing and slows recovery.
- If you drink, don't have any alcohol for at least 48 hours before surgery. · If you use any other types of controlled substances, tell your doctor. Narcotics and other drugs can have an impact on your surgery, particularly on your anesthesia.
- Eat well. If you are overweight, your doctor may recommend weight loss.
- Ask your doctor for pre-surgical exercises. Isometric exercises can help maintain the strength of your leg muscles. Also ask about the exercises that will be prescribed after surgery. If you familiarize yourself with these postoperative exercises and practice them now, they will be easier to perform after the surgery.

Plan ahead for your homecoming

Recovering from joint replacement surgery takes time. But you can take steps now that will help make your recovery easier and faster. Planning ahead is the key to minimizing stress and optimizing your outcome.

- If you live alone or have other special needs, consider going to a specialized rehabilitation facility after discharge from the hospital.
- Arrange for someone to take you home and to stay with you for several days after your surgery.
- If you do the cooking, make double batches of everything for a week or two before your surgery and freeze some so that you have two weeks of meals available on hand. Or, stock up on ready-made foods that you enjoy.
- Place items you use regularly at arm level so you don't have to reach up or bend down.



Laura Sciaroni MD
Orthopedic Surgery and Sports Medicine
www.drsciaroni.com

- Borrow a walker or a pair of crutches and see how well you can maneuver through your home. You may need to rearrange furniture or temporarily change rooms (make the living room your bedroom, for example). If you can arrange to live on one level of your house (access kitchen, bathroom and a place to sleep without having to deal with stairs) it will make your first week home much easier.
- Remove any throw or area rugs that could cause you to trip. Securely fasten electrical cords around the perimeter of the room.
- Consider modifying your bathroom to include a shower chair, gripping bar, or raised toilet.
- Shop for things that will make your life easier after surgery. Your list might include a long-handled shoehorn, a long-handled sponge, a grabbing tool or reacher, a footstool, a big-pocket shirt or soft shoulder bag for carrying things around.
- Set up a "recovery center" where you will spend most of your time. Things like the phone, television remote control, radio, facial tissues, wastebasket, pitcher and glass, reading materials and medications should all be within reach.
- If you do not already have a parking permit for a disabled person, apply for a temporary permit several weeks prior to your surgery. Contact the Department of Motor Vehicles, or your doctor's office may have an application form.

Medical preparations

Several health care professionals will be involved in your surgery. As an active participant in health care decisions, you should ensure that each professional has the information necessary for proper decision-making.

- Your primary care physician or an internist will conduct a general medical evaluation several weeks before surgery. This examination will assess your health and your risk for anesthesia. The results of this examination should be forwarded to your orthopaedic surgeon, along with a surgical clearance.
- If you will be donating your own blood for the surgery, donation times should be scheduled at least one week apart, beginning about six weeks and ending approximately five days before your surgery. During this time, you should be especially careful to eat properly and take a daily iron supplement. ***Many orthopaedic surgeons no longer recommend routine donation prior to joint replacement for most healthy patients. Check with your doctor to see if you should donate or refrain.
- Shortly before your scheduled surgery, you will probably have an orthopaedic examination to review the procedure and answer any last-minute questions.
- The anesthesiologist will meet with you on the day of surgery.
- You may need to take several types of tests, including blood tests, a cardiogram, a urine sample and a chest X-ray.
- Advise your doctor of any medical conditions you have and of all the medications you are taking. You may need to stop taking certain medications or your surgeon may recommend substitute medications until your surgery.



Laura Sciaroni MD
Orthopedic Surgery and Sports Medicine
www.drsciaroni.com

- If you are planning dental work such as extractions or periodontal treatments, schedule them well in advance of your surgery. Do not schedule any dental work, including routine cleanings, for 3 months after your surgery.
- Notify your doctor if you come down with a fever, a cold or any other illness in the week before the surgery.

The 24 hours before your surgery will be busy. Use this checklist to make sure you don't forget anything.

- Take a shower or bath the night before your surgery with antibacterial soap. This will help reduce the risk of infection.
- If you regularly shave your legs, DO NOT shave the area of the surgery for at least a week before the surgery. If this is necessary, the doctor will take care of it.
- Do not wear any make-up, lipstick or nail polish.
- Do not eat or drink anything after midnight the night before surgery. This will help prevent any nausea from the anesthesia and minimize risk of pulmonary (lung) complications. If you do eat or drink within 8 hours of your surgery start time, your surgery will probably have to be cancelled and rescheduled for another day.
- Do bring a hospital bag. Some of the items you should include are: A pair of comfortable, sturdy bedroom slippers with non-skid soles. Something to read. Copies of your insurance cards, advance medical directives and medical history. Any medications you regularly take. Personal care items such as a hair brush, denture case, eyeglass case, contact lens case; leave your cash, credit cards and jewelry at home. A loose-fitting sweat suit or jogging suit and comfortable shoes to wear home. If you haven't asked others for help yet, do so now. Have someone check in with you daily. You'll recover more quickly if you have a little help.