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## Questions about the surgery

### **Q: What is Total Joint Replacement?**

A: A Total Joint Replacement procedure involves the complete removal of a damaged or arthritic joint, and its replacement with an artificial joint implant, called prosthesis. Commonly replaced joints include the shoulder, hip, and knee. Total Joint Replacements are typically recommended when non-surgical treatment methods such as physical therapy, cortisone injections, and medications, fail to alleviate joint pain and improve range of motion and strength.

### **Q: Why do I need a Shoulder Replacement?**

A: If you have severe arthritis causing unrelenting pain and stiffness in your shoulder, and you are unable to lift your arm for such basic activities as washing, dressing, or eating, you may be a candidate for shoulder replacement.

### **Q: How long do artificial joints last?**

A: On average, artificial joints have a lifespan of 15-20 years. If you are in your 40-50 years old when you have your joint replacement surgery, especially if you live an active lifestyle, you are likely to need another joint replacement surgery later in life.

### **Q: What type of anesthesia is used?**

A: Most patients receive a combination regional block and general anesthesia. Your anesthesiologist will speak with you before the procedure and address any of your questions or concerns.

### **Q: What should I wear to my surgery?**

A: You should plan to wear loose, comfortable clothing and supportive, stable shoes. Slip on shoes are easier to get into after surgery. Try to bring in a loose top that opens in the front.

### **Q: When will I have my first post-operative appointment?**

A: Your surgeon will need to see you for a follow-up appointment around 10-14 days after your surgery. Your surgeon will then assess your recovery to determine the timing of additional appointments.

## Questions about care after surgery

**Q: Can I get publicly-funded home care after my surgery?**

A: When planning to have an elective surgery, it is important that you think about the home support that you may need and make a plan with your family. Services are also available for a fee. Let your surgeon know well before surgery if you need help to make a support plan. A hospital Social Worker can talk to you about your options.

**Q: What if I can't manage at home after my surgery?**

A: The benefit of knowing when you will have surgery is the opportunity to plan ahead. If you don't have the support of family or friends to help you after your surgery, ask your surgeon to connect you with a Social Worker through our Prehabilitation Program. The Social Worker can give you suggestions for fee-for-service homecare providers, respite care facilities (for profit places to stay after your surgery) or other options that you may not have considered.

**Q: Can I go to inpatient rehab after my surgery?**

A: Patients typically do not need inpatient rehabilitation after hip or knee surgery and you should plan your home support with the expectation that you will be going home after surgery. It is expected that you will go to an outpatient physiotherapy program for your rehabilitation, meaning that you will leave your house to go to physiotherapy appointments, starting 7-14 days after your surgery for 12-16 weeks. Your surgeon and the rest of your team will make sure that you will be safe at home.

## Questions about recovery after surgery

**Q: How long will my recovery take?**

A: With regular physiotherapy, range of motion should be nearly restored within 12 weeks. With continued strengthening exercises, both strength and function of your shoulder should be dramatically improved in three to four months, with complete recovery within a year after surgery.

**Q: How long must I wear the sling?**

A: This will depend on the type of surgical procedure. After having total joint replacement, you will generally wear a sling for 4 to 6 weeks. Your surgeon will decide how long the sling is beneficial based on the type of procedure and your recovery.

**Q: When should I start physiotherapy?**

A: Therapy usually begins 7-14 days after surgery for shoulder replacement patients. Your physiotherapist will follow a strict protocol to ensure your new shoulder is safe.

**Q: How often should I do my home exercises?**

A: More is not always better! Please follow the instructions of the physiotherapist for frequency and number of repetitions or weight. While some of your exercises may be uncomfortable while you are doing them, the pain should go back to your baseline once you stop doing the exercise. If you feel heightened pain or have significant increase in swelling for an extended period of time after exercising, you should do less and call your physiotherapist for instructions.

# SHN Shoulder Replacement Surgery

## *Frequently Asked Questions*

**Q: When should I stop cold therapy?**

A: When you do not have any pain, inflammation, or swelling, you can stop cold therapy. If you experience pain or swelling after exercising or returning to activity, use cold therapy. Even when you do not have symptoms, you can use cold therapy to prevent symptoms from starting. Follow the icing schedule in your patient handbook for relief from pain and swelling.

**Q: When can I return to sport-specific activities?**

A: Your surgeon will make this decision on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration the type of surgery you had, your normal range of motion, strength, and flexibility, and your symptoms. Many patients return to sport-specific activities around 4 to 6 months after surgery.

**Q: When can I start driving after surgery?**

A: Four to six weeks after your surgery is typically a safe time to start driving, **provided you are no longer using a sling or taking a narcotic medication.**

**Q: When can I return to work after surgery?**

A: This depends on the type of surgery you had, and the type of work you do (sedentary/desk job vs. physically demanding active work). It is very important to discuss this issue with your surgeon before your surgery.

## Questions about complications

**Q: What should I do if I think I have re-injured my shoulder?**

A: Do not assume it will heal on its own. Please call your surgeon's office right away to determine if you need an evaluation.

**Q: What happens if I have a fever after the operation?**

A: A low-grade fever (below 101.5 °F or 38.6°C) is common for several days after surgery and does not usually indicate infection. If your temperature remains higher than normal after several days or is higher than 101.5°F or 38.6°C, call us for instructions.

**Q: What is the risk of a blood clot with Total Shoulder Replacement?**

A: Blood clots are uncommon after shoulder replacement surgery, but to prevent them your surgeon may prescribe 325 mg of Aspirin twice a day for 4 weeks. If you have a history of blood clots, please notify your surgeon immediately as you may require stronger blood thinners. If you think you have a blood clot after surgery, please call us immediately.

### Questions about Bundled Care

**Q: What is Bundled Care?**

A: The Ontario government changed the way shoulder replacement surgery is funded. Under the new program, the hospital is given a set amount of money to cover all the expenses related to your surgery. Not all shoulder replacement surgeries are covered under the “bundled care program” and whether or not it is covered has implications for how your physiotherapy is paid. Your care team will let you know how physiotherapy will be planned for your specific circumstances.

**Q: Do I have to pay for my physiotherapy?**

A: For most shoulder replacement patients, physiotherapy is covered by the hospital as part of the “bundled care program”. The hospital pays for the physiotherapy that you need to recover from your surgery and resume normal daily activities. For shoulder replacement patients that are not part of the “bundled care program”, physiotherapy is usually covered by OHIP if you stay in the hospital overnight or are 65 years old or older.

**Q: I have a physiotherapy clinic near my house. Will the hospital pay for me to go there?**

A: If you are a patient that is part of the “bundled care program” (the hospital pays for your physiotherapy), before you can go to the clinic of your choice, the hospital has to call the clinic to come to an agreement. If the clinic agrees to the hospital’s terms, the hospital will pay for your physiotherapy. If the clinic does not agree, you can choose to pay for the physiotherapy yourself or go to a different clinic that has an agreement with the hospital. You also have the option of coming back to the hospital for your physiotherapy.

For those that are NOT part of the “bundled care program”, you can pay out of pocket or through insurance at any physiotherapy clinic that you choose but you do have the option to get your physiotherapy free at the hospital’s physiotherapy clinic. You may also be eligible for physiotherapy covered by OHIP at a publicly-funded physiotherapy clinic.

### Miscellaneous Questions

**Q: When can I have dental procedures or other invasive procedures following joint replacement?**

A: Generally dental work and other invasive procedures can be performed 2 months after a Total Shoulder Replacement or Reverse Shoulder Replacement. You will need to take prophylactic antibiotics an hour before such procedures to reduce the risk of infection.

**Q: Will my implant set off a metal detector?**

A: Shoulder replacements do contain metal so this is a possibility, but it depends on the sensitivity of the detector and the amount of other metal in your body. We do not provide cards stating that you have had a joint replacement since the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) will not accept them. Simply tell the security agent about your shoulder replacement if the alarm is activated.

**Q: Can I have an MRI after the operation?**

A: Yes. Even though shoulder replacements contain metal, it is safe to have an MRI after a minimum of 6 weeks after surgery.