

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PATIENTS FOLLOWING HIP REPLACEMENT

Pain

The amount of pain varies from one individual to another. There should be a gradual decrease in pain over the first 2 weeks. However, some days will be worse than others. By the time you leave the hospital your pain should be able to be controlled with tablets.

Wound

You should have a clean dressing on your wound when you leave hospital. You should remove the dressing 10-12 days from the date of surgery. No further dressings are necessary if there is no discharge from the wound. You may allow the wound to get wet after the dressing is removed. There are no stitches to be removed as they are dissolvable.

If there is increased pain, redness, swelling or discharge at the wound, you should contact Dr Graham ASAP.

Swelling

It is normal to experience some degree of swelling of the rest of the leg after a hip replacement. The degree of swelling is greater after you have been sitting for long periods. If there is a lot of swelling you should rest in bed more and sit less. You may continue to take short walks. You should also move your ankle up and down to pump fluid out of your leg.

If you experience any chest pain, pain in the calf or shortness of breath you should contact Dr Graham, your GP or the local hospital immediately.

Walking

You may gradually increase the amount of walking over the weeks. The amount of activity should be determined by how your leg feels. The general rule is if it causes increased discomfort, you should decrease your activity. For the first 4-6 weeks you should use some form of support such as crutches or a stick when walking. After 6 weeks it may still be beneficial to carry a stick in public for security and so that others are more considerate of you. The stick should be carried in the opposite hand to the side of the replaced hip. Physiotherapy is not required after you get home.

Prevention of dislocation

Dislocation is a risk after a hip replacement; especially for the first 3 months and is related to the position you put the hip. You should be conscious of the position of your thigh in relation to your trunk. You should avoid bending up your thigh more than 90° in relation to your trunk. When you are sitting, you should remember to keep your knees about a shoulder width apart. Postures and movements to avoid include - leaning forward to reach an object while sitting; twisting your trunk to reach for an object behind or on your side while sitting; leaning forward to get out of a low chair or toilet seat; reaching for your feet in any position; bending to pick up objects from the floor and getting in and out of a car.

Aids

You should use a raised toilet seat for the first 6 weeks after your hip replacement. For the first 3 months, you should not bend over and pick objects from the floor or put on socks and shoes yourself by trying to reach the foot. You can purchase a long picking up grasper/reacher or use long barbeque tongs to pick up objects from the floor.

Driving

You should not drive for the first 6 weeks after your hip replacement. You should not undertake long trips in the car or take a long plane flight for the first 3 months.

Sleeping

If possible you should try to sleep on your back for the first 6 weeks. If you must sleep on your side you should have a pillow to keep your knees apart at least 6 inches.

Sexual Activity

In the first 3 months, during sexual activity it is important to remember not to bend up your hip beyond 90° in relation to your trunk and to keep your knees a shoulder width apart.

In the long term

You may walk as much as you wish but you should avoid impact activities such as jogging and aerobics. You should avoid sports such as skiing and skating where there is a risk of a fall. A heavy fall may cause a fracture around the prosthesis or a dislocation. It is safe to participate in swimming, cycling and social doubles tennis. The risk of dislocation is low after the first 3 months but you should still avoid bending up your hip further than it wants to. Being a mechanical device, the hip replacement can wear out over many years of service. It is important to return for follow-up every second year once your hip replacement is more than 5 years old or earlier if you notice any change in pain or function. Please be aware; any dental work where there is a risk of blood borne contamination will require antibiotic cover (provided by your Dentist) for 12 months after surgery.