

Exercising after total hip replacement

How to get started

Rehabilitation and maintenance of the joint replacement to full function will only occur with a full rehabilitation plan. Ask your doctor or surgeon to advise you on an independent exercise plan after your operation and during the following 8-12 weeks postoperative time. Regular exercise after joint replacement from 12 weeks onwards will continue to help relieve pain, improve function, increase mobility and help improve your overall health. Activities of daily living such as work, chores and leisure activities with friends and family will also be easier and with regular exercise your risks of heart disease, hypertension, obesity, diabetes, stroke, cancer and osteoporosis are significantly reduced.

Regular cardiovascular exercise after total hip replacement aids weight control, which also helps reduce the risk of early loosening or deterioration of the replacement joint. Weight bearing cardiovascular exercises such as walking can also improve bone density. Regular strength, flexibility and balance exercises will help increase your joint range of movement and muscle strength which may make daily activities such as driving more comfortable. If you have been inactive then start your exercise plan slowly and gradually build up to restore and maintain your range of movement.

Take all medicines as recommended by your doctor or pharmacist.

Warm up and cool down

Always start your exercise session with a 10–15-minute warm up to loosen up the muscles and raise the heart rate safely. Warm-up exercises include simple stretches, range-of-motion activities and beginning the activity at a low intensity. They can be done standing up, walking around, marching on the spot or seated.

Always end your exercise session with a 10–15-minute cool down to ensure your heart rate and breathing return to normal safely. Cool-down exercises include simple stretches and slowly decreasing the intensity of your activity. You should feel relaxed but energised after exercise!

The exercises!

Cardiovascular/stamina exercises—get your heart rate up!

How often:	Aim for at least 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week, or 150 minutes a week in total. If you are new to exercise, start with 2–3 days a week and add additional sessions as your strength and stamina increase.
How hard:	Low to moderate intensity—aim to get slightly breathless. Increase the duration of exercise before you increase the intensity.
How long:	Aim for at least 30 minutes. If you haven't exercised before, start with 5–10-minute sessions and add 10-minute intervals until you can comfortably exercise for 30 minutes.
Type:	Try low-impact exercises such as walking, swimming, aqua aerobics, dancing, golfing and cycling. When you are able to move more easily without pain, progress to activities such as spinning or 'exercycle' classes, or specific exercise machines.

What will it do for me?

Cardiovascular exercise helps you lose and maintain your weight and reduces pain and immobility.

Strength exercises—use your muscles!

How often:	Two to three times a week.
How hard:	Low intensity to avoid pain. Consider a variety of exercises that use gravity, weights or resistance bands.
How many:	Choose a combination of 8–10 exercises targeting the upper and lower body, and repeat each exercise 10–15 times. Try 1–3 sets of each exercise.
Type:	Walking, side steps and step-ups are great exercises. Try quad sets, heel slides, straight leg raises, side leg raise, ankle pumps, toe stands, standing knee curls, back leg raise, leg straightening and a variety of core and upper body exercises.

What will it do for me?

Strength exercises increase your quality of life, increase walking speed and distance, and reduce pain and disability. Improved muscle strength will also help you reduce your falls risk and help improve your balance and maintain muscle mass.

Flexibility exercises—stretch!

How often:	Daily. Start with 2–3 days per week and increase to improve range of motion and flexibility of joints.
How many:	Try 8–10 stretch exercises using the upper and lower body and repeat 10–15 times. Try 1–2 sets.
How long:	Hold each stretch for 10–30 seconds.
Type:	Try Tai Chi, yoga or home stretch exercises. Joints should be moved as far as possible without causing pain. Chair and floor exercises help reduce the risk of injury and falls.

What will it do for me?

Stretch exercises help improve mobility, range of movement and help maintain joint, muscle and bone health.

Balance exercises—Move with confidence!

How often:	Twice a week. Start with one session per week if necessary, and gradually work towards two.
How many:	Choose 2–3 balance exercises and repeat each exercise 10–15 times.
How long:	Hold each balance for 10–30 seconds.
Type:	Try yoga, Tai Chi and home balance exercises. Ask your doctor or health care provider for a specific balance plan. Always exercise safely when doing balance exercises. If you are at high risk of falling, do seated balance exercises or exercise using a sturdy chair or wall for support.

What will it do for me?

Practising balance exercises helps to train your body to react more quickly to impending balance loss, thereby reducing the risk of falls, fractures and injuries. They also improve your posture.

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Your exercise, your way!

Choose activities that are easy to start with and that you enjoy! Try exercising with friends and family or join a group class. Try exercising both indoors and outdoors and see which you prefer!

Exercise safety

Avoid high impact exercise such as running, tennis, basketball, jumping, high-impact aerobics and skiing as these may cause the replacement joint unnecessary 'wear and tear'. Also avoid contact sports to prevent damage to the replacement joint and reduce your fracture risk.

Start with shorter sessions (e.g. 10–15 minutes) and slowly build up to the recommended level.

Aim to get slightly out of breath, but exercise sensibly and stop the activity if you feel unwell.

Always wear comfortable clothing and shoes that give good support. Take frequent breaks if necessary and drink water before, during and after exercise.

Ensure you exercise safely during all exercises and ask for assistance if you are unsure about any exercises.