

Is outpatient surgery right for you?



Outpatient centers are increasing in popularity due to the benefits of having surgery in the outpatient setting. The decision to get a joint replacement can be difficult and you probably have questions about whether or not outpatient surgery is right for you. This guide is designed to help you understand the differences between inpatient and outpatient joint replacement surgeries. It will walk you through a typical outpatient experience so that you feel prepared and confident on the day of your joint replacement.

Outpatient Surgery General Information

Inpatient surgery is done in a typical hospital setting. Outpatient surgery is often, but not always, at a center that is separate from a hospital. There are many differences between inpatient and outpatient surgery. In this guide, we will focus on two main differences: protocol differences and how you recover from surgery.

Protocol Differences

In many inpatient settings, the requirements for anesthesia, pain control, and other factors may be dictated by the facility and not your surgeon.

With outpatient surgery in an ambulatory surgery center (separate from the hospital), the surgeon may have more control over your anesthesia and pain control. He or she can determine what is best for you based on your needs and history. Often there are one or two nurses caring for each patient. Surgeons who perform surgery in outpatient centers follow a “less is more” approach, which simply means they tailor the surgery to you.

How You Recover

In an inpatient setting, you will often remain at the hospital for several days. In an outpatient setting, as long as there are no complications, you will most likely be discharged before 23 hours, which allows you to recover in the familiar setting of your home.



Understanding your surgery

Before Surgery

Before you have surgery your doctor will X-ray your affected joint. You will be given prescriptions to fill and have ready for you when you return home to recover. Your surgeon will also give you printed materials about the process for the days leading up to surgery, day of surgery, as well as steps that need to be taken when you are at home. Specific physical therapy exercises will probably also be included in the printed material you receive.

Day of surgery

On surgery day you will report to the surgical center as directed and begin preparations for the procedure. Using a needle, a small intravenous (IV) tube will be inserted into a vein in your arm. The tube will be used to administer antibiotics, pain medication, and liquid nutrition during and after your surgery.

Your blood pressure and heart will be monitored. Your anesthesiologist will talk with you again about the type of anesthesia you will receive. A team of nurses will care for you in the time leading up to surgery and in the operating room. The time required for surgery depends on what surgery you are receiving.

Following surgery

After your surgery you will be moved from the operating room to the recovery area to recover from anesthesia. Your vital signs will be checked frequently.

You will be given some food and drink in the recovery area. An X-ray will be taken to show the positioning of your implant, usually within three hours of surgery. Some patients may be walking short distances at that point. Time spent in the recovery area varies depending on your individual response to the anesthetic.



Going home

You may be assessed for discharge from the outpatient center after surgery. Your family or a close friend will take you home. Depending on the outpatient center, you may have physical therapy at the outpatient center or at home in the days following surgery.