

## Shoulder Replacement: Before Your Surgery

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### What is shoulder replacement surgery?

In shoulder replacement surgery, a doctor removes the end of the upper arm bone. Often they also take out the end of the shoulder bone. The ends are replaced with plastic or metal pieces.

### How do you prepare for surgery?

Surgery can be stressful. This information will help you understand what you can expect. And it will help you safely prepare for surgery.



### Preparing for surgery

- Be sure to have extra help at home. This is most important if you live alone or care for another person.
- Be sure you have someone to take you home. Anesthesia and pain medicine will make it unsafe for you to drive or get home on your own.
- Understand exactly what surgery is planned, along with the risks, benefits, and other options.
- If you take aspirin or some other blood thinner, ask your doctor if you should stop taking it before your surgery. Make sure that you understand exactly what your doctor wants you to do. These medicines increase the risk of bleeding.
- Tell your doctor ALL the medicines and natural health products you take. Some may increase the risk of problems during your surgery. Your doctor will tell you if you should stop taking any of them before the surgery and how soon to do it.
- Make sure your doctor and the hospital have a copy of your advance care plan. If you don't have one, you may want to prepare one. It lets others know your health care wishes. It's a good thing to have before any type of surgery or procedure.

You have an important part in getting ready for your surgery. Planning ahead and getting your body healthy can make your hospital stay more comfortable. It also gets you home and helps you recover faster.

### Plan Ahead

- **Plan a ride home.** Ask a family member or friend to bring you home after your hospital stay.

- **Plan for meals.** Good nutrition is important for your recovery, but cooking may be harder to do right after you get home. Prepare and freeze meals before your surgery or ask friends and family to help you cook or shop for groceries.
- **Get help with chores.** After you get home you may need help. For a short time after your surgery, you may be told to avoid certain physical activities. Plan ahead and arrange to have some help with chores after your surgery.
- **Buy gum or hard candies.** Chewing gum and sucking on hard candies may help get your bowels moving after surgery.

**Be as healthy as possible**

- **Be active.** Being active before surgery will make it easier for you to be active after surgery. If you're normally active, keep doing your regular activities up to the day of your surgery. If you aren't used to exercising, start slowly. You can start by going for 15 minute walks.
- **Eat healthy.** Eating healthy foods will give your body the nutrients it needs to prepare for and handle the surgery. Eat healthy foods and drink enough fluids in the weeks before your surgery. Your healthcare team will tell you how long before surgery that you need to stop eating and drinking.
- **Manage your medical conditions.** If you have other medical conditions, such as anemia or high or low blood sugar, ask your healthcare team what you need to do to prepare for surgery.
- **Quit tobacco.** You can heal faster and prevent lung problems after surgery if you quit tobacco. Aim to quit smoking and using tobacco and tobacco-like products at least 4 weeks before surgery. Talk to your healthcare team about ways to quit or cut back. Visit [AlbertaQuits.ca](http://AlbertaQuits.ca) for helpful tips and support.
- **Don't drink alcohol 24 hours before surgery.** Alcohol, cannabis, and other drugs may interact with medicines you take before and after surgery. Talk to your healthcare team if you need help stopping or cutting back on alcohol, cannabis, or other drugs.

**Do the following before your surgery to help you feel better sooner and recover faster.**

**The day before surgery**

- Know the time of your surgery, when you need to be at the hospital, and where you need to go when you get there.
- Follow any instructions the healthcare team or your surgeon gave you for your medicines (including herbal or complementary medicines).
- Don't drink alcohol 24 hours before your surgery.



- **Stop** eating 8 hours before surgery. This is very important!  
**What happens on the day of surgery?**

Plan to arrive at the hospital on time.

- Follow any instructions provided
- Bring all of the things you packed for your hospital stay **if** you are being admitted.
- Follow **all** other instructions the healthcare team gave you to prepare for surgery.
- Bring your CPAP if you use one



If your doctor told you to take your medicines on the day of surgery, take them with only a sip of water.

- Take a bath or shower before you come in for your surgery. Do not apply lotions, perfumes, deodorants, or nail polish.
- Do not shave the surgical site yourself.
- Take off all jewellery and piercings. And take out contact lenses, if you wear them.

### At the hospital



Bring a picture ID Health Card

- The area for surgery is often marked to make sure there are no errors.
- You will be kept comfortable and safe by your anesthesia provider. The anesthesia may make you sleep. Or it may just numb the area being worked on.

### When should you call your doctor?

- You have questions or concerns.
- You don't understand how to prepare for your surgery.
- You become ill before the surgery (such as fever, flu, or a cold).
- You need to reschedule or have changed your mind about having the surgery.

## Shoulder Replacement Surgery: What to Expect at Home

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### Your Recovery

You will go home with a bandage and stitches, staples, You can remove the bandage when your doctor tells you to. If you have staples, your doctor will remove them in 10 to

14 days. If you have stitches that are not the type that dissolve, your doctor will remove them in 10 to 14 days. You may still have some mild pain, and the area may be swollen for several months after surgery. Your doctor will give you medicine for the pain.

A physiotherapist will show you what exercises to do at home.

You will continue the rehabilitation program (rehab) you started in the hospital. The better you do with your rehab exercises, the sooner you will get your strength and movement back.

### **How can you care for yourself at home?**



#### **Activity**

- Rest when you feel tired. You may take a nap, but don't stay in bed all day.
- Work with your physiotherapist to learn the best way to exercise.
- You will have a sling to wear. It's also a good idea to put a small stack of folded sheets or towels under your upper arm while you are in bed to keep your arm from dropping too far back.
- Your arm should stay next to your body or in front of it for several weeks, both while you are up and during sleep.
- Don't lift anything with the affected arm for 6 weeks.
- Ask your doctor when you can drive again.



#### **Diet**

- Start off with light foods such as soup, toast and tea. Avoid dairy and fatty foods as it may upset your stomach.
- Drink plenty of fluids (unless your doctor tells you not to).
- You may notice that your bowel movements are not regular right after your surgery. This is common. Try to avoid constipation and straining with bowel movements. You may want to take a fibre supplement every day. If you have not had a bowel movement after a couple of days, ask your doctor about taking a mild laxative.



#### **Medicines**

- Your doctor will tell you if and when you can restart your medicines. He or she will also give you instructions about taking any new medicines.

- If you take aspirin or some other blood thinner, ask your doctor if and when to start taking it again. Make sure that you understand exactly what your doctor wants you to do.
- Be safe with medicines. Take pain medicines exactly as directed.
  - If the doctor gave you a prescription medicine for pain, take it as prescribed.
  - If you are not taking a prescription pain medicine, ask your doctor if you can take an over-the-counter medicine.
- If you think your pain medicine is making you sick to your stomach:
  - Take your medicine after meals (unless your doctor has told you not to).
  - Ask your doctor for a different pain medicine.
- If your doctor prescribed antibiotics, take them as directed. Don't stop taking them just because you feel better. You need to take the full course of antibiotics.
- If you take a blood thinner, be sure you get instructions about how to take your medicine safely. Blood thinners can cause serious bleeding problems.



### **Incision care**

- If your doctor told you how to care for your cut (incision), follow your doctor's instructions. You will have a dressing over the cut. A dressing helps the incision heal and protects it. Your doctor will tell you how to take care of this.
- If you did not get instructions, follow this general advice:
  - If you have strips of tape on the cut the doctor made, leave the tape on for a week or until it falls off.
  - If you have stitches or staples, your doctor will tell you when to come back to have them removed.
  - If you have skin adhesive on the cut, leave it on until it falls off. Skin adhesive is also called glue or liquid stitches.
  - Change the bandage every day.
  - Wash the area daily with warm water, and pat it dry. Don't use hydrogen peroxide or alcohol. They can slow healing.
  - You may cover the area with a gauze bandage if it oozes fluid or rubs against clothing.
  - You may shower 24 to 48 hours after surgery. Pat the incision dry. Don't swim or take a bath for the first 2 weeks, or until your doctor tells you it is okay.



### **Exercise**

- Shoulder rehabilitation is a series of exercises you do after your surgery. This helps you get back your shoulder's range of motion and strength. You will work with your doctor

and physiotherapist to plan this exercise program. To get the best results, you need to do the exercises correctly and as often and as long as your doctor tells you.



## Ice

- For pain, put ice or a cold pack on the area for 10 to 20 minutes at a time. Put a thin cloth between the ice and your skin.

**Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety.** Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.



## When should you call for help?

**Call 911** anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You have severe trouble breathing.
- You have symptoms of a blood clot in your lung (called a pulmonary embolism). These may include:
  - Sudden chest pain.
  - Trouble breathing.
  - Coughing up blood.

**Call your doctor** or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have severe or increasing pain.
- You have symptoms of infection, such as:
  - Increased pain, swelling, warmth, or redness.
  - Red streaks or pus.
  - A fever.
- You have tingling, weakness, or numbness in your arm.
- Your arm turns cold or changes colour.

## Discharge

### How you may feel after your operation

- You may feel nauseated, light headed dizzy or sleepy for up to 24 hours after your surgery
- You may have a slight temperature for 2 days

- You may feel tired for a few days after your surgery

**For 24 hours after your surgery do not....** Drive a vehicle  
Operate heavy equipment  
Drink alcohol or smoke  
Make any important or legal decisions

## **At Home**

You may need some help once you are home. It may take up to a few months before you fully recover. Talk to your healthcare team if you have any concerns about your recovery.

- Slowly get more active.
- Eat healthy and drink fluids as you did before surgery (unless your healthcare team gives you other instructions).
- Drink oral nutritional supplements (like Ensure Protein Max) for the first month after surgery to give you extra protein and help you heal faster.
- Take less pain medicine as your pain gets better.
- Take your blood thinner and other medicines as you were told.

What is anesthesia?

Anesthesia controls pain. And it keeps all your organs working normally during surgery or another kind of procedure.

Anesthesia can relax you. It can also make you sleepy or forgetful. Or it may make you unconscious. It depends on what kind you get.

Your anesthesia provider (anesthesiologist) will make sure you are comfortable and safe during the procedure or surgery.

There are different types of anesthesia.

- **Local anesthesia.** This type numbs a small part of the body. Doctors use it for simple procedures.
  - You get a shot in the area the doctor will work on.
  - You will feel some pressure during the procedure.
  - You may stay awake. Or you may get medicine to help you relax or sleep.
- **Regional anesthesia.** This type blocks pain to a larger area of the body. It can also help relieve pain right after surgery. And it may reduce your need for other pain medicine after surgery. There are different types. They include:

- Peripheral nerve block. This is a shot near a specific nerve or group of nerves. It blocks pain in the part of the body supplied by the nerve. This is often used for procedures on the hands, arms, feet, legs, or face.
- Epidural and spinal anesthesia. This is a shot near the spinal cord and the nerves around it. It blocks pain from an entire area of the body, such as the belly, hips, or legs.
- **General anesthesia.** This type affects the brain and the whole body. You may get it through a small tube placed in a vein (IV). You are unconscious and will not feel pain. During the surgery, you will be comfortable. Later, you will not remember much about the surgery.

What type will you have?

The type of anesthesia you have depends on many things, such as:

- The type of surgery or procedure and the reason you are having it.
- Test results, such as blood tests.
- How worried you feel about the surgery.
- Your health. Your doctor and nurses will ask you about any past surgeries. They will ask about any health problems you may have, such as diabetes, lung or heart disease, or a history of stroke. They will want to know if you take medicine, such as blood thinners. Your doctor may also ask if any family members have had any problems with anesthesia. You will talk with your anesthesia provider about your options. In many cases, you may be able to choose the type of anesthesia you have.

What can you expect after having anesthesia?

Right after the surgery, you will be in the recovery room. Nurses will make sure you are comfortable. As the anesthesia wears off, you may feel some pain and discomfort from your surgery.

Tell someone if you have pain. Pain medicine works better if you take it before the pain gets bad.

You may feel some of the effects of anesthesia for a while. It takes time for the effects of the medicine to completely wear off.

- If you had local or regional anesthesia you may feel numb and have less feeling in part of your body. It may also take a few hours for you to be able to move and control your muscles as usual.
- When you first wake up from general anesthesia, you may be confused. Or it may be hard to think clearly. This is normal.



- Don't do anything for 24 hours that requires attention to detail. This includes going to work, making important decisions, or signing any legal documents.

Other common side effects of anesthesia include:

- Nausea and vomiting. This does not usually last long. It can be treated with medicine.
- A slight drop in body temperature. You may feel cold and shiver when you first wake up.
- A sore throat, if you had general anesthesia.
- Muscle aches or weakness.
- Feeling tired.

You may go home the same day of surgery or you may stay in the hospital. Your doctor will check on your recovery from the anesthesia. He or she will answer any questions you may have.

For answers to frequently asked questions about your anesthetic, please visit

<https://www.cas.ca/en/about-cas/advocacy/anesthesia-faq>