Home Care Instructions
This handout will review the care you need to follow once you are home. If you have any questions or concerns, please ask your nurse or doctor. Our staff is here to help you. If you have questions after you are at home, please call the numbers at the end of this handout.

Activity
The total recovery time after a total hip replacement varies from person to person. For most people, recovery is a 6-8 week process. Surgery can cause you to feel weak and tired. Common sense will tell you when you are doing too much. On the other hand, too little activity can delay the return of your strength and stamina. Follow these guidelines to help keep your recovery process on track.

- Follow the home exercise program your physical therapist (PT) has shown you.
- The correct use of your crutches or walker will prevent injury to your hip. You may need to use a cane until you can walk without a limp. By 6-8 weeks most patients no longer need to use a cane, walker, or crutches.
- Walking is good for you. Set a time to walk, at least twice each day. Let pain be your guide. As you get stronger, increase the distance you walk each day.
- Keep doing your exercises 3 times a day, for 3 months. Then switch to a maintenance program doing the same exercises 3 times a week for at least one year.
- To prevent falls, use caution when getting up too quickly.
- Your surgeon will determine if you need to follow any precautions after your hip replacement.

Care for you Incision
Proper care of your incision helps to prevent infection

- Keep your incision clean and dry. Use extra layers of plastic wrap for showers.
- You may leave your incision open to air when it is dry.
- Do not wash directly on the incision. Wash around the incision gently with soap and water and allow it to air dry.
- Do not use any creams, lotions, ointments or alcohol near or on the incision.
- Check your incision daily for any changes.
- Some redness and swelling is normal.
- A small amount of clear or slightly blood tinged drainage from your incision is normal.
- If you have a brace, you will also be given brace care instructions.
You will be given instructions about when your dressing should be removed.

Check for Signs and Symptoms of Infection

- A persistent fever of 101.0°F for 24 hours.
- Increase in swelling.
- Increase in redness around the site.
- Increase in drainage from site.

A mild fever is common after joint replacement surgery. A fever does not always mean infection. The fever should slowly decrease in time.

Bruising and Swelling

As you become more active, you may notice some swelling and bruising in your leg or foot. There are some things you can do to prevent or decrease this swelling.

- Raise your legs between periods of walking. Lie flat on your back and raise the operative leg above the level of your heart.
- Keep doing your ankle pumps and quad sets. See PT exercise sheet.
- If swelling occurs after you exercise, use the elevation and ice therapy method to the site.

Elevation and Ice Therapy Method

Elevate swollen leg above the level of your heart. Ice the area for 20 minutes as often as needed. Do not put the ice directly on the skin. Use a ready-made ice pack or put ice in a plastic bag and wrap in a towel before you use it.

Pain Management

You may need to use pain medicine at home. Do not drive if taking narcotic pain medicine. The pain medicine can cause you to be unsteady on your feet, feel nauseated and cause constipation. Some patients find pain relief from methods other than pain medicine.

Suggestions:

- Elevation and ice therapy
- Deep breathing exercises
- Distraction
- Repositioning

Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT or blood clot)

Patients who have total joint replacement are at a greater risk of getting a deep vein thrombosis or blood clot. Symptoms of a blood clot include severe leg swelling along with pain, redness and/or tenderness in the calf. Call the Orthopedic Clinic if you have these symptoms.

A blood clot in your leg can break off and travel to your lungs. This is called a pulmonary embolism, and is rare. Symptoms of a pulmonary embolism include shortness of breath and chest pain. If you have any of these symptoms, call 911 or visit the Emergency Department.

Driving and Travel

- Do not drive 2-6 weeks after surgery.
- Do not drive while taking narcotic pain medicine.
- You can request a temporary disabled parking permit at your first post-op appointment if needed.
You may travel over two hours 6-8 weeks after your surgery.
Stretching every hour will decrease stiffness as you travel.
Metal joint implants will trigger metal detectors in airports.
Please give yourself time to get through security.

**Future medical or Dental Treatment**
Do not have routine dental work done for 3 months after your joint replacement. If dental work must be done in cases of infection or a dental emergency, please notify the Orthopedic Clinic.

You will need to take a dose of antibiotics before your dentist appointment to protect your hip joint from infection. This is recommended for life.

Always tell your doctor or dentist before:
- All dental care, including routine cleaning.
- Colonoscopy

**When to Call the Doctor**
- If you have an infection in other places like your bladder, throat, or lungs, these infections can “travel” to the hip and cause problems. Call both your primary medical doctor and your joint replacement surgeon.
- Increased tingling or numbness in your leg or foot.
- Increased pain, swelling or redness in or around your incision site.
- An increase in the amount of drainage, change in the color of drainage, or any odor from your incision. Be ready to describe what the drainage looks, how it smells, and how much there is.
- A new blister(s) near or on the incision.
- A fever that lasts 24 hours above 101.0° F
- Sudden increase in pain or pain not relieved by medicine.
- A sudden “popping” feeling in your hip.
- If you cannot move your hip.
- Severe leg swelling, pain, redness and/or tenderness in either calf.

**If you have shortness of breath or chest pain, go to the emergency room or call 911.**

**Future visits**
Your first clinic visit should be 2-4 weeks after surgery. This may have been scheduled before surgery. If it wasn’t, we will be help you schedule before you are discharged.

**Pain Medicine Refills**
If you need a refill on your pain medicine, call the Orthopedic Clinic at (608) 263-7540, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and ask for the nurse. Please call when you have a 2 to 3 day supply left of your medicine. **Do not wait until you run out.** Narcotic pain medicines by law cannot be called in over the phone or faxed.
Phone Numbers
If you have questions or concerns, please call the Orthopedic Clinic, Monday throughout Friday between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., at (608) 263-7540. After 5:00 pm and nights/weekends call (608) 262-0486. If you live out of the area, call 1 (800) 323-8942. Ask the operator to page the “orthopedic resident on call”. Leave your name and phone number with area code. The doctor will call you back.