

Physical Therapy for Outpatient Joint Replacement Surgery

Why do I need physical therapy before surgery?

1. Almost every insurance requires 6 weeks of physical therapy before surgery or they will not cover the cost of surgery
2. Physical therapy can be very beneficial in preparing you for your upcoming joint replacement surgery

What are the benefits of physical therapy Before surgery?

1. Physical therapy can improve your strength to help facilitate your postoperative recovery
2. Physical therapy can help improve the motion in your joint to make it easier to regain your motion after surgery
3. Physical therapy can help you address mobility issues that occur after surgery like stair climbing, getting in/out bed, on/off the toilet, bathing, and getting in/out car
4. Physical therapists can make recommendations about how to arrange your home to make your recovery easier

What about physical therapy After surgery?

1. Physical therapy after surgery can help you recover your range of motion and strength after surgery
2. The timing of physical therapy is different for hip patients and knee patients though because the surgeries are fundamentally different

How often will I go to Physical therapy after knee replacement surgery?

1. For the first six weeks, you will go to physical therapy once a week to regain the range of motion of your knee

2. This therapy will not be comfortable but should not be significantly painful.
3. If therapy is very painful, you should contact Dr. Swank's office
4. After 6 weeks, when you see Dr. Swank in the office, he will order another 6-12 weeks of physical therapy to work on strengthening your muscles

Why is Dr. Swank's protocol different than other doctors?

1. Dr. Swank does not cut the muscle during surgery so it is usually easier to achieve range of motion after surgery requiring less therapy in the early postoperative period
2. Even though the muscles are not cut, they are still very inflamed after surgery and not ready for significant isolated strengthening even if the range of motion has been achieved
3. Over strengthening early on can lead to unnecessary pain and swelling of the knee and can actually interfere with the recovery process

Why doesn't Dr. Swank order physical therapy for the first 6 weeks after hip replacement surgery?

1. Dr. Swank performs hip replacement surgery with an implant that requires the bone to grow into it like a broken bone
2. For the first 6 weeks, you are essentially walking around on a broken leg even though it generally feels pretty good after a couple of weeks.
3. Falling on the leg and manipulating the leg, particularly while twisting it can actually cause the bone to break requiring another surgery
4. Once the bone has healed, when you see Dr. Swank in the office for your 6 week postoperative visit, he will order physical therapy to work on your hip motion and strengthening