

Setting Expectations with Your Surgeon

Total hip and total knee replacements have improved the quality of life for millions of people worldwide by relieving pain and restoring function and motion caused by arthritis and other joint conditions. People with successful joint replacements are able to stand, walk, rest and participate in recreational activities with little pain. While some people would be satisfied if they achieve these basic goals, others will expect to do more like participating in physically demanding sports and hobbies.

If you are considering joint replacement surgery, you should have an **open, honest discussion with your surgeon about setting expectations** for pain relief and function after surgery. You can learn about what to expect from the early recovery phase through the final result.

Based on your unique medical history and your physical and mental condition prior to surgery, your surgeon will also have expectations about your level of function after surgery. Setting high expectations that are unrealistic can lead to dissatisfaction with the final result. Setting expectations too low may not allow you to achieve the best possible function and result after surgery. **Your expectations and your surgeon's expectations should be aligned so that you can achieve the highest level of satisfaction with your procedure.**

Surgeons aim to guide expectations for recovery through discussions with their patients so that there is agreement on the goals of surgery. In one of our studies, we observed that recovery expectations were not aligned in at least 50% of patients undergoing elective joint replacement surgery. The take home message is that it is paramount to discuss the expectations for pain relief and function with your surgeon **before** undergoing a total joint replacement to make sure you're both on the same page.

References

1. Ghomrawi HMK, Franco Ferrando N, Mandl L, Do H, Noor N, Gonzalez Della Valle A. How often are patient and surgeon recovery expectations for total joint arthroplasty aligned? Results of a pilot study. *The Journal of Hospital for Special Surgery* 2011; 7:229-234.

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