

Will my artificial joint set off airport security metal detectors?

Belt buckles, key chains and smartphones may set off sensitive metal detectors at airport security checkpoints. Many commonly used orthopaedic implants may also set off the metal detectors. **Over 90% of implanted total hip and knee arthroplasty devices will set off airport metal detectors.**¹ Many implants now include ceramic and plastic materials in addition to metal, and the metal will still likely cause an alarm.

A card from your physician is no longer needed for identification of these type of implants.

If you or a family member has a metal implant, he or she should inform a Transportation Security Administration (TSA) officer before screening begins. Passengers can use the TSA's Notification Card to communicate discreetly with security officers; however, showing this card or other medical documentation will not exempt a passenger from additional screening.

Many patients now prefer to be screened by imaging technology (X-ray machine) to reduce the likelihood of a pat-down being necessary. If a pat-down is selected by the TSA, it will be helpful to wear clothes that allow you to easily reveal your surgical scar.

We recommend allowing additional time for airport screening when traveling with a joint replacement due to the high likelihood of setting off a detection alert. This helps ensure a more pleasant travel experience and prevents travel delay or disruptions.

More Resources

- TSA information on metal implants.
- TSA Notification Card
- 1. Johnson AJ, Naziri Q, Hooper HA, Mont MA. Detection of total hip prostheses at airport security checkpoints: how has heightened security affected patients? *J Bone Joint Surg Am* 94(7): e44, 2012

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This article has been written and peer reviewed by the AAHKS Patient and Public Relations Committee and the AAHKS Evidence Based Medicine Committee. Links to these pages or content used from the articles must be given proper citation to the American Association of Hip and Knee Surgeons.