



# Exercising after total hip replacement

## Every move counts

Move more and reduce your sedentary time each day by incorporating different types of movement. It is never too late to start, some is always better than none!

## How to get started

Rehabilitation and maintenance of the joint replacement to full function will only occur with a full rehabilitation plan. Ask your doctor or surgeon to advise you on an independent exercise plan after your operation and during the following 8-12 weeks postoperative time.

Regular exercise after joint replacement from 12 weeks onwards will continue to help relieve pain, improve function, increase mobility and help improve your overall health. Activities of daily living such as work, chores and leisure activities with friends and family will also be easier and with regular exercise your risks of heart disease, hypertension, obesity, type 2 diabetes, stroke, some cancers and osteoporosis are significantly reduced.

Regular exercise after total hip replacement aids weight control, which also helps reduce the risk of early loosening or deterioration of the replacement joint. Weight bearing or impact exercises such as walking can also improve bone density. Regular strength, flexibility and balance exercises will help increase your joint range of movement and muscle strength which may make daily activities such as driving more comfortable. If you have been inactive, then start your exercise plan slowly and gradually build up to restore and maintain your range of movement.

**Follow the rehabilitation advice and guidance of your surgical and physiotherapy team at all times.**

**Take all medicines as recommended by your doctor or pharmacist.**

## Warm up and cool down

**Always start your exercise session with a 10–15-minute warm up to loosen up the muscles and raise the heart rate safely.** Warm-up exercises include dynamic stretches, range-of-motion activities and low intensity movements. This can be done standing up, walking around, marching on the spot or seated.

**Always end your exercise session with a 10–15-minute cool-down to ensure your heart rate and breathing rate return to normal safely.** Cool down exercises include slowly decreasing the intensity of your activity and simple stretches.

## Be active

### Some is good, more is better

<b>How much:</b>	Follow the rehabilitation advice and guidance of your surgical and physiotherapy team at all times. Aim eventually for at least <b>150 – 300</b> minutes a week of moderate intensity physical activity. Start moving more each day increasing to regular movement every day and add sessions as your strength and stamina improve.
<b>How hard:</b>	Any movement helps. Aim for moderate intensity—aim to get slightly breathless. Take frequent breaks, if necessary.

<b>How long:</b>	Aim to spread out your sessions throughout the week. If your fitness level is low, start with 5–10-minute sessions and add 10-minute intervals until you can comfortably exercise for longer.
<b>What type:</b>	All physical activity counts. Try activities within your abilities: low-impact exercises such as walking, swimming, lawn bowling, dancing, golfing and cycling. Household activities such as gardening are great activities for your health.

### What will it do for me?

*Regular exercise helps you lose and maintain your weight and reduces pain and immobility.*

## Build strength

<b>How much:</b>	At least twice a week.
<b>How hard:</b>	Start with light muscle strengthening exercises to avoid pain. Gradually progress to moderate or greater intensities.
<b>How long:</b>	Choose a combination of 8–10 exercises targeting the upper and lower body, and repeat each exercise 10–15 times. Try 1–3 sets of each exercise.
<b>What type:</b>	A variety of strength exercises using free weights, resistance machines or household items such as a can of beans or a weighted water bottle as a weight. Try marching on the spot, straight leg raises, side leg raises, squats, toe stands, and bridge exercises. Avoid holding your breath or over lifting.

### What will it do for me?

*Strength exercises increase your quality of life and make everyday activities like getting out of a chair or climbing stairs easier. Improved muscle strength will also help you reduce your falls risk and help improve your balance and maintain muscle mass.*

## Improve balance

<b>How much:</b>	At least three days a week. Start with one session per week and gradually work towards three.
<b>How hard:</b>	Try 2–3 balance exercises and repeat each exercise 10-15 times.
<b>How long:</b>	Hold each balance for 10-30 seconds.
<b>What type:</b>	Try standing on one foot, walking on your heels or toes, toe raises, and Tai' chi. Always exercise safely when doing balance exercises. If you are at high risk of falling, do seated balance exercises or exercise using a sturdy chair or wall for support.

### What will it do for me?

*Practicing balance exercises helps to train your body to react more quickly to impending balance loss and can help reduce the risk of falls, fractures and injuries.*



# Exercising after total hip replacement

## Flexibility exercises—stretch!

<b>How much:</b>	Daily. Start with 2–3 days per week and increase to improve range of motion and flexibility of joints.
<b>How hard:</b>	To effectively stretch go to the point of mild discomfort and hold.
<b>How long:</b>	Hold each stretch for 30-45 seconds.
<b>What type:</b>	Try Tai Chi or home stretch exercises such as hip flexion, seated hamstring (back of thigh) stretches, quadricep (front of thigh) stretches and calf stretches. Joints should be moved without causing pain.

### What will it do for me?

*Stretch exercises help improve mobility, range of movement and help maintain joint, muscle and bone health.*

## Sedentary living

**Reduce the amount of time being sedentary.** Move more and break up sedentary time. Sedentary behavior is defined as time spent sitting or lying with low energy expenditure, while awake in the context of occupational, educational, home and community settings, and travel. Higher amounts of sedentary behavior can increase the risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some cancers.

**Replace sedentary behavior with more physical activity of any intensity (including light intensity).** It is possible to avoid sedentary behaviour and be physically active while sitting or lying, through, for example, upper body led activities, inclusive and/or wheelchair-specific sport and activities. Try seated stretches for those with limited mobility; using active forms of transport; standing while working (within your abilities and environment), and other accessible active options to replace sedentary time.

## Your exercise, your way!

Choose activities that are easy to start with, and that you enjoy as recommended by your surgical team. Always exercise within your abilities. If mobility is difficult, adapted cycling, swimming and chair-based exercises may be better alternatives. Exercise with friends and family or join a group class to improve your motivation levels and engage in social activities. Try exercising both indoors and outdoors and see which you prefer! Most importantly: **some physical activity is better than none.**

## Exercise safety

The following activities are generally not recommended after hip replacement: running, jogging, squash, racquetball, contact sports, sports where jumping is involved, heavy lifting (over 50 lbs) to prevent damage, to the replacement joint, limit unnecessary 'wear and tear' and reduce your fracture risk.

On the advice of your surgeon and/or surgical team, downhill/cross-country skiing, horseback riding, skating/snowshoeing, canoeing/kayaking/rowing, some yoga poses, tennis/pickleball (doubles) and hockey may be considered after 3-6 months.

Start with shorter sessions (e.g. 10–15 minutes) and slowly build up to the recommended level. Aim to get slightly out of breath, but exercise sensibly and stop the activity if you feel unwell.

Always wear comfortable clothing and shoes that give good support. Take frequent breaks if necessary and drink water before, during and after exercise.

Ensure you exercise safely during all exercises and ask for assistance and supervision if you are unsure about any exercises.

Choose environments that you can access freely and safely with resting places. Please ask your healthcare provider or local leisure organizations for advice on the best option for you.

Please ask your healthcare provider for information on modification or adaption for exercises within your abilities.

## Helpful resources

This guide provides exercises and information for patients who have had a hip replacement and who have been told they are weight bearing as tolerated. <https://sunnybrook.ca/content/?page=musculoskeletal-hip-replacement-exercise-guide>

The Canadian Orthopedic Foundation provides tips and exercises to get you moving after your total hip replacement. <https://whenithurtstomove.org/wp-content/uploads/Get-Moving-Booklet-EN.pdf>



Scan for more physical activity resources!

