

# Going Home After Joint Replacement Surgery

---



*You will soon be undergoing joint replacement surgery and your surgeon has recommended that Advocate at Home provide the home-based rehabilitation and care you will need following your surgery. This booklet will introduce you to our services and provide you with information about our Joint Replacement Care at Home Program and the recovery process.*

*Thank you for choosing Advocate at Home as your partner for care following your surgery. If you have any questions or would like to talk to a therapist or nurse, do not hesitate to contact us at **1.800.564.2025**.*

### **What is Home Care?**

Home health care is a service, ordered by your physician, after an illness, surgery, hospitalization, stay in a skilled nursing facility (SNF) or rehab facility. We provide the services of nurses and therapists (physical and occupational) to assist in your recovery and rehabilitation right in the comfort of your own home. Private insurance and Medicare typically cover the cost of this service.

After you have had orthopedic surgery, it's important to find a rehabilitation program that ensures healthy healing to the joint, improves your mobility and function, and partners with your physicians to help you manage your other health needs.

### **How do I Qualify for Home Care Services?**

Your surgeon has determined that you are a candidate for home care services following surgery. In order to qualify for services under Medicare, you must have difficulty leaving your home on a regular basis and have a skilled need for therapy or nursing services. Individual insurance policies may also have special requirements. Ideally, you should have someone who can stay with you and provide assistance for at least the first 48 hours following hospital discharge. Your physician may have other criteria that would determine whether you will go home from the hospital or will transition first to a SNF or rehab facility for a short stay before going home. In most cases, a stay in a SNF or rehab facility will also be covered by Medicare or private insurance.

The Advocate at Home liaison and hospital discharge planner will also assess your condition at discharge and address any concerns you or your family may have about going home.

### **What are the Benefits of Home Care?**

After joint replacement surgery, patients will have some difficulty moving around due to pain, weakness or decreased endurance. Therapy is usually needed to help patients return to their previous activity level, and studies have shown that patients who receive physical therapy in their home following surgery improve faster in their ability to move around.

Home health care services bring the rehabilitation and nursing care to you, in your home. Receiving these services at home will allow you to conserve your energy so that you can more fully participate in therapy.

Our patients also find it very beneficial to have therapy in their home because our therapists show them how to safely navigate in the home environment, including stairs, bathroom and shower.

Our goal is to transition you to outpatient services as your condition improves. Often, home care services may only last 2 weeks, at which time you will feel much more able to travel to an outpatient facility to continue your therapy.

### **Why is Advocate at Home Providing my Home Care Services?**

Advocate at Home, the home care division of Advocate Health Care, specializes in providing home-based orthopedic rehabilitation. We care for many joint replacement surgery patients, and our highly skilled therapy and nursing team has experience and expertise in caring for patients in their homes. As part of Advocate Health Care, Advocate at Home also offers a seamless transition from the hospital, SNF or rehab facility. We work closely with your surgeon and hospital discharge planner to coordinate your care.

### **What Services will I Receive?**

After surgery, patients usually receive care from a team that includes a physical therapist, nurse, occupational therapist and aide. Services will vary based on a patient's needs, but the key service will be physical therapy.

We work with your surgeon to tailor your care to your specific physical abilities. Our team continually communicates with each other and your surgeon to ensure that your care is coordinated and progressing as expected.

Our rehabilitation program allows us to customize a therapy program based on your needs and the surgeon's protocols and standards of care. In addition, we will make the first visit the day after you are discharged, weekends included. With Advocate at Home, you won't skip a beat in your therapy when you transition to home services.

Therapy will focus on improving strength, balance, range of motion and mobility. We will also teach you the exercises that you need to continue to progress. The team will work with you to minimize pain, teach you about your medication and check your incision for changes or signs of infection.

Other special services may also be provided based on your personal care plan. This may include:

- Monitoring your blood if you are taking a blood-thinning medication such as Coumadin (warfarin)
- Monitoring the use of specialized medical equipment (i.e., CPMs or thermal cooling machines)
- Removing staples or providing specialized wound care
- Helping to manage other symptoms or side effects you may be experiencing

Once you are home, Advocate at Home is available by phone to you 7 days a week, 24 hours a day, including holidays, if you have an issue or concern that needs to be addressed.

### **I am Going to a SNF or Rehab Facility after the Hospital Discharge. Will I still Require Home Care Services when I Go Home?**

Yes. We often see patients after discharge from a SNF or rehab facility. Again, we can assist you in continuing to gain strength and mobility in your home. Your length of stay in home care may be decreased depending on your condition and your progress with therapy. Our goal is to transition you to continue to receive therapy as an outpatient when you are ready.

### **What can I do Now to Prepare for My Recovery at Home?**

We strongly encourage you to attend the joint replacement surgery class prior to your surgery. These classes are held at the hospital or in the doctor's office. During this class, you will receive additional information about the surgery you will be undergoing and the hospital recovery process. You will also receive information about equipment you may need at home and where to obtain it. You may want to use community lending closets for equipment you may need just for a short time, or you may borrow these from family or friends. For your convenience, most joint replacement class materials will include a list of local lending closets.

We know that you may be experiencing pain prior to surgery, so do not worry if you are not able to do special exercises. However, we do encourage you to remain as active and functional as you can before surgery. If you have permission from your doctor, you may want to do some light arm or leg strengthening exercises or continue any exercise programs you are currently doing.

### **Check List for a Safe Transition Home following Orthopedic Surgery**

We encourage you to prepare your house in anticipation for your return home after surgery. Please be sure to let your nurse or therapist know if your home environment makes any of the following recommendations difficult or impossible.

- I have someone who can stay with me for the first 48 hours after I come home from the hospital.
- I have the equipment I need or will have it before coming home including:
  - Walker with wheels or crutches
  - Raised toilet seat or commode
  - Shower chair or bench
- I have sturdy hand rails for any stairs I may need to use.
- I have a chair with arms that is easy to get in and out of.
- I have removed throw rugs and have tacked down runners that might interfere with safe walking in my house.
- I can get in and out of my bed without using a step or riser.
- I have a nightlight in the bathroom.
- I have prepared and frozen pre-cooked meals.
- I have arranged my kitchen so that frequently used items such as pans or small appliances are at arm level to prevent the need to bend or kneel after surgery.
- I have prepared ice packs ahead a time. (You will need these when you come home.)

### **How to Make an Ice Pack**

- Add one 16-oz bottle of rubbing alcohol to a 1-gallon plastic zip lock bag.
  - Fill bag with 16 oz of tap water.
  - Remove any excess air in the bag and close the bag tightly. Place this filled and closed bag into another 1-gallon plastic zip lock bag removing any excess air and closing tightly.
- Put bag in the freezer for 1 hour. Because the mixture will not freeze completely it will be very pliable and mold easily around your hip, knee or back.
- To use the ice pack, remove from freezer, wrap in a towel and apply the ice pack to the involved area for 10 to 15 minutes.
- After removing the ice pack return it to freezer for next time.
- Check your skin every 5 minutes for excessive redness, blanching or white or blue areas. If these occur, remove the ice pack and check with your therapist.

## **You Can Count on Us**

As a patient in our Joint Replacement Care at Home Program, you will receive care from a team that includes experienced nurses, physical therapists, occupational therapists and aides who are experts in orthopedic care. Our goal is to help you recover from your joint replacement surgery and improve your mobility and function.

If you have questions, please call us at **1.800.564.2025**.

