

Argus Orthopaedic Zone

How Old Is Too Old, Part II

By Thomas J. Haverbush, M.D.
Orthopaedic Surgeon

Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

Last week all of you who were in class learned that whether you are 68 or 86 is a number and not the determining factor of whether a joint replacement can or should be done. At least not in my office.

I also talked about the necessary “clearance” for total joint replacement that is so standard nowadays.

Everyone knows that major surgery carries certain risks of complications. This is particularly true if certain conditions exist which I listed.

Regaining Mobility

Some of our patients take longer to regain mobility after surgery. The longer this takes the risk of complications increases.

Another concern after any major surgery is that the patient becomes temporarily disoriented. It is very important for patients and especially families to know this before surgery, as it is really hard to explain it to them if they had no clue it might happen.

The Good News

With newer surgical techniques, changes in anesthesia and Joint Camp programs we are able to enhance the early rehabilitation process so our total joint replacement patients recover much faster than years ago.

I also have to try to wean patients off narcotics as soon as I can. Narcotics postop, as the patient is trying to begin ambulation, makes them confused in many cases and also to lose their balance.

Rehabilitation

Most patients and families have a pretty good idea if they will need to go to a Rehab place after their 3 days in the hospital. It really needs to be addressed during the preoperative planning phase. Whether you will need to go to a Rehab place depends on your overall health, living arrangements at home and the amount of help you will have once you go home.

Home Sweet Home

If you are going home it might work if you can be on one floor, have a hospital bed in most cases, and use a bedside commode or a very close bathroom with a toilet riser. The home care nurse and physical therapist also need to come to your home.

Get tripping hazards and loose rugs out of the way.

And you will need a lot of family and friends’ help to get through the rehab process at home.

Many patients can do it, but it does put a large burden on the family. I know this from personal experience!

Don’t Wait Too Long

Sadly a lot of my patients wait way too long, have become immobile due to pain and have developed other medical problems on top of the arthritis.

If you wait till you can barely walk, you have waited too long and rehab for you will be an uphill climb. Don’t wait until you can’t walk due to pain.

Hopefully, this at least clarifies somewhat the notion that “I’m too old for a joint replacement”.

A new hip or knee joint can be life changing for many of my patients. It could be for you too.

Office Website and Argus Orthopaedic Zone Archive

Thank you loyal readers for joining us each week. Do yourself a favor and log onto www.orthopodsurgeon.com.

It contains a world of musculoskeletal information you and your family and friends can use! Website, Your Orthopaedic Connection, Archive of all previous Argus articles. Please check it out. Be well.

Dr. Haverbush