

## **DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS FOR TOTAL HIP REPLACEMENT PATIENTS**

1. Do not flex the hip over 90 degrees and do not cross your knees.
2. Please, take with you the elastic stockings that were provided to you in the hospital, or get a pair of support socks in a medical supply pharmacy. Have someone put on your elastic stockings in the morning and have them removed at night before going to bed. Use large, comfortable shoes so you can easily put them on and take them off, without having to reach your foot. You also need assistance to put on your shoes, and cut your toenails; the flexion required to reach your foot may cause the hip to dislocate in the early postoperative period.
3. Sit in a high armchair. The height should be approximately 25” if you are 6’ or taller, 22” if you are about 5½’ and 20” if you are 5’ or less. Use your hands to assist you in sitting and rising from the high armchair. Use a high toilet seat. Sitting in a low seat may dislocate the hip before it heals.
4. If your bed is low, raise it to a height as outlined above by placing another mattress on it or blocks under its feet.
5. At night, sleep with a pillow between your thighs and knees; you may turn in bed as long as a pillow is between your knees. You can lie on the operated side if it does not hurt you.
6. You cannot drive a car for the first six weeks after surgery. You could be a passenger, provided you are very careful getting in and out of the car. Place the seat high, back and recline the back-seat backwards.
7. Follow the instructions given to you by the physical therapist at the hospital, regarding the use of a cane, crutches or walker, as well as the amount of weight that you were instructed to put on the operated leg.
8. The staples should be removed 12 to 15 days after surgery. Before you leave the hospital, ask the nurse for a staple removal kit. The staples can be removed in the rehabilitation center or by a local nurse or doctor. Otherwise, please call my office for an appointment and I will be glad to remove them for you. The day after the staples have been removed, you may take showers. Get into the shower as instructed by the physical therapist.
9. Continue the exercises as instructed and as tolerated. If your hip hurts, don’t do them until the pain subsides. **The exercise that involves flexion and extension of your ankles and feet is essential and you should do it several times a day. It will prevent the formation of clots in your veins.**
10. **IMPORTANT NOTICE ABOUT ANTICOAGULATION AFTER SURGERY:** Depending on the type of surgery and your past medical history, I will prescribe a mild (aspirin) or a potent blood thinner after surgery (Coumadin):
  - a. *If you are not on aspirin*, continue taking Ascriptin (Aspirin) 325mgs., one after breakfast and one after dinner for another two weeks. Thereafter take only one after breakfast until you complete 6 weeks of treatment after the operation.

- b. *If you are on warfarin/Coumadin*, the daily dose is dictated by the internist who cleared you for surgery at HSS. You need periodic blood tests to decide the daily dose of *warfarin/Coumadin*. At home, visiting nurses will order the tests. Make sure the results are transmitted to your internist who will advise the adequate daily dose. **This is paramount to prevent bleeding or inadequate anticoagulation.**
11. Some hip pain and swelling that could extend down to your leg is not unusual during the first few weeks after surgery, and it should ease as time goes by. Your walking distance and level of activities can progressively increase according to how your hip feels.
12. **IMPORTANT NOTICE ABOUT PAIN MEDICATION AFTER SURGERY:** Good pain control is important for a prompt recovery. You will probably need prescription pain medication during the first weeks after surgery. You will leave the hospital with the necessary prescriptions. If you need refills or a change in the type of pain medication, please plan ahead and let my office know at least 7 days in advance. Prescription pain medication needs to be mailed to your pharmacy and consequently there will be a delay of several days before you actually receive the medications that you need.
13. You may have swelling in the hip area that could extend down to the thigh and leg. You may also have black and blue bruising. It will subside in a few weeks, particularly if you follow the enclosed Swelling Instructions.
14. Read carefully the manual you received at the preoperative class **“Your Pathway to Recovery following Total Hip Replacement”**. It will provide useful information.
15. **Please answer the enclosed questionnaire**, to monitor your overall surgical experience.

The above is intended as a general guide during the first six to eight weeks after total hip replacement. You will return to see me for x-rays and examination on the date and time specified in the accompanying **Appointment Card**. At that time, depending upon your progress, activities are usually increased and restrictions decreased.

Alejandro González Della Valle, MD  
Orthopaedic Surgeon - Hospital for Special Surgery  
Associate Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery – Weill Medical College of Cornell University