

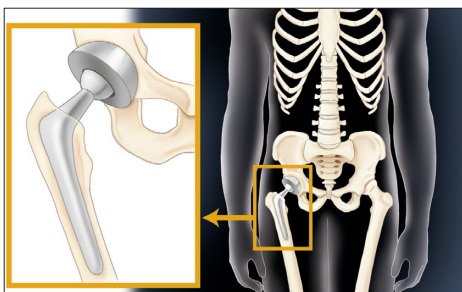
Total Hip Replacement

How Long Does It Take to Recover?

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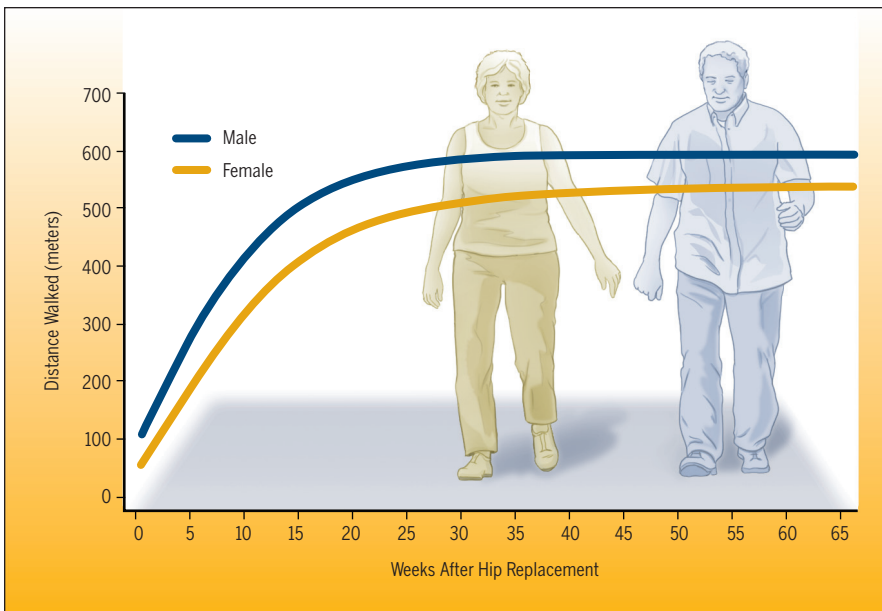
ARE YOU CONSIDERING A HIP REPLACEMENT? IF SO, you probably have been suffering from hip pain that makes daily activities difficult. If physical therapy, walking aids (cane or walker), or medications have not helped decrease your pain or improve your ability to get around, you and your orthopaedic surgeon may be discussing a hip replacement (see illustration below). Each year, about 200 000 patients decide to have a hip replacement. An important factor to

consider is the recovery process following surgery. Researchers have found that most patients have decreased pain and improved ability to perform their daily activities after a hip replacement. However, what remains unknown is how long it takes to recover. In its April 2011 issue, *JOSPT* published a research study providing new evidence that can help you understand the time needed to recover after this surgery and how soon you will be able to walk more easily.



HIP REPLACEMENT. A hip replacement may be considered if you have difficulty with daily activities, such as walking or going up and down stairs, and your hip pain does not improve with physical therapy, walking aids (cane or walker), or medications.

EVALUATING YOUR RECOVERY. Rapid recovery typically occurs in the first 12 to 15 weeks. However, you can expect to have continued improvements for the first year. The graph below shows the recovery time for men and women, based on the distance they are able to walk in 6 minutes.



NEW INSIGHTS

In this study, 65 patients (average age, 61 years) were followed for up to 65 weeks after a total hip replacement. The study determined whether people had recovered by measuring how far they could walk in 6 minutes and using what they reported about their problems in doing daily activities. Both measures were taken prior to surgery and at several points during the recovery process. The researchers found that most patients had a rapid recovery during the first 3 to 4 months after surgery, but improvements then continued at a slower rate for up to a year. These findings are important, because, if you do not see rapid improvement in the first 3 to 4 months after surgery or if you stop making progress during the first year, you may benefit from an evaluation to determine if additional exercises or other forms of rehabilitation would help your recovery.

PRACTICAL ADVICE

Improvements in strength, balance, and coordination after a hip replacement are needed to help patients return to their daily activities and decrease their risk for falls. Researchers have previously shown that hip strength and muscle weakness persist up to 2 years after surgery. Based on the rapid recovery in the first 3 to 4 months, some patients may stop doing their exercises, which may limit their recovery and place them at risk for falls. On the flip side, some patients may be frustrated if they are not getting better faster. The recovery chart (left) can help you check your progress, set goals for your recovery, and begin to answer the question "How am I doing compared to others?" For more information on rehabilitation following a hip replacement, contact your physical therapist specializing in musculoskeletal disorders.

For this and more topics, visit *JOSPT Perspectives for Patients* online at www.jospt.org.

This *JOSPT Perspectives for Patients* is based on an article by Kennedy DM et al, titled "Using Outcome Measure Results to Facilitate Clinical Decisions the First Year After Total Hip Arthroplasty" (*J Orthop Sports Phys Ther* 2011;41(4):232-239. doi:10.2519/jospt.2011.3516).

This Perspectives article was written by a team of *JOSPT's* Editorial board and staff, with **Deydre S. Teyhen**, PT, PhD, Editor, and **Jeanne Robertson**, Illustrator.



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