

## **Total Elbow Arthroplasty**

### ***What is a Total Elbow Arthroplasty?***

A total elbow arthroplasty (elbow replacement) is a surgical procedure in which parts of an arthritic joint are replaced with a prosthesis or artificial parts. One-part fits into the humerus (upper arm), and the other part fits into the ulnar (forearm). The two parts are then connected and held together by a pin. This artificial joint is designed to move like a normal, healthy joint.

### ***How do you replace the elbow?***

The prosthesis will be placed through an incision down the back of the elbow. The humeral and the ulnar components are cemented into place. The two parts then fit together like a hinge.

### ***Length of Stay***

You will spend two nights in the hospital after this surgery. You will need to have someone to drive you home after you have been discharged.

### ***Anesthesia***

Patients usually have two types of anesthesia for this surgery. The first is general anesthesia, which means you are asleep. The second type of anesthesia is a nerve block. Your arm will be numb and will feel very strange. The nerve block will last about 12-14 hours. The anesthesiologist will speak to you on the day of surgery. The ultimate choice of anesthesia technique is up to you and your anesthesiologist.

### ***Incision***

You will have an incision down the back of your elbow. After the incision has healed, it is usually very thin and not very noticeable.

### ***Pain***

You will have pain medication prescribed for you prior to discharge. After the nerve block wears off you will have discomfort. It is important to stay on top of the pain medication. Most patients receive Toradol, which is a strong anti-inflammatory. Begin taking this medication when you get home. The Narcotic you are prescribed should be used as a rescue medication as needed. For the first 2 days it is advised that you take 1 of these pills around the clock to stay on top of the pain. If it is too strong, you can take Extra strength Tylenol in its place.

### ***Splint***

Your arm will be placed in a splint prior to leaving the operating room. The splint will be removed before you go home. A removable splint will be made for you prior to discharge.

## ***Dressings***

You will go home with gauze dressings covered with ace wraps. You are to leave those in place until your first post operative visit (10-14 days after the day of surgery). You may cover the dressings with a plastic trash bag to keep them dry while showering. Under the dressings are staples. These also will be removed at your first follow up visit.

## ***Physical Therapy***

Before leaving the hospital, you will be taught your home exercise program. For the three months of recovery, you will do these very gentle stretches at home. Formal physical therapy will begin after a couple of weeks.

## ***Restrictions***

Recovery from total elbow replacement is three months. During that time you will have restrictions on the use of your operative arm. You may drive when you feel that you can properly control a car and you are **NOT** taking narcotic pain medication.

**Day of surgery to Week 6:** no lifting, no weight-bearing

**Weeks 6-12:** no repetitive lifting greater than 5lbs

## ***In the Future***

*Procedures-* After an elbow replacement if you are going to have an invasive procedure you will need to get a prescription for antibiotics beforehand for life. Invasive procedures include any dental work (including cleanings), urine or bladder procedures. Please let us and your other doctor know that you have a joint replacement and need antibiotics before the procedure.

*Activities:* In general, you should avoid lifting over 5 lbs with the operative arm for life.

## ***Follow Up Appt***

You should have had your follow up appointment made at the time of your preoperative appointment. You should be seen at around 10-14 days.

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