

# Same-day shoulder replacement pathway

What to expect with surgery and recovery



**Ascension  
Saint Thomas**

# Planning ahead for surgery

---

## Get everything you need before surgery

- Prepare your home for your return. Create safe and clear pathways to walk. *(See page 7 of your Living with a Shoulder Replacement book)*
- Stock your fridge with food that is easy to prepare or grab-n-go items. Make sure you are eating healthy meals before and after surgery.
- Designate a “coach” to be available to take you home from the hospital and to stay ONE night at home with you.
- Have comfortable clothing to wear that is very loose. A button-up or zip-up shirt/jacket or light T-shirt/tank works best.
- Start using incentive spirometry.
- Purchase stool softener to use after surgery (Ex: Colace, Miralax).
- Most patients find a recliner or chair with ottoman to be more comfortable to sleep in right after surgery.
- Start washing with your surgical soap four days prior to your surgery, with the final wash being on the morning of your surgery.

CHG bathing schedule				
Shower #1	Shower #2	Shower #3	Shower #4	Shower #5 (day of surgery)

## It's the day before surgery

- Hydrate! Drink eight large glasses of water today.
- Is your house ready for your return?
- Is your fridge full?
- Do you have ice packs ready at home?
- Look at your directions so you know where you're going and what time to arrive.
- Pack snacks and favorite electrolyte drink (i.e. Gatorade).
- Have comfortable clothes laid out to wear and non-skid shoes with a back.
- Charge your devices and bring to the hospital.
- Eat a healthy substantial meal for dinner and drink an electrolyte beverage, but nothing to eat after 11 p.m.
- Morning of surgery you can have clear liquids up until two hours before your arrival time.

## It's the day of surgery

- Please arrive at the time given to you by your surgeon's office or the hospital.
- You may drink clear liquids until two hours prior to your arrival at the hospital.
- Once you are taken to the surgery holding area they will start to get you ready for surgery.
  - Start your IV
  - Shave the shoulder with sterile clippers if necessary
  - Your surgeon will mark your surgical site.
  - You will speak to the anesthesiologist and receive a nerve block that will decrease pain after surgery.
- The surgery typically lasts around two hours.
- You will go to recovery once the surgery is complete. You will have a waterproof bandage over the incision, and a sling on your operative arm.

## Discharge goals — before leaving the hospital

- Stable vital signs; pain is controlled; able to urinate; work with therapy; tolerate lunch
- Understand that pain is expected after surgery, but your pain should be at a level where you are able to achieve your activity goal (work with therapy, rest comfortably).
- Therapy to work with patients and caregivers on use of the arm sling. You will need to wear the sling throughout the day and while sleeping. You may remove your sling a few times per day to bend and straighten your elbow.
- Case manager will visit if there are discharge needs.

## Factors for prolonged hospital stay

**Urinary retention:** If you have a problem with urinary retention, prostate problems or currently taking pain meds, please let the pre-operative clinic know this at your appointment. Urinary retention in men is the most common reason to end up spending the night if you had planned to go home.

**Dizziness:** Anesthesia and pain medicine can cause dizziness. That is why hydrating the day before surgery is important to minimize these effects. We also plan on having you to eat as soon as surgery is over.

**Nausea with the medications:** If you are prone to nausea, vomiting or motion sickness tell us pre-operatively and we can prescribe medication as part of your discharge medications.

**Side effects to the narcotics:** This can be a real issue and thus we avoid any narcotics in the anesthesia and treatment of patients unless absolutely necessary. If you've taken narcotics in the past and have had issues, tell us before surgery so we can alter the opioid prescription if needed.

## Other things to discuss at your pre-operative appointment

Issues with anxiety; tape allergies; sensitivities to anti-inflammatories; history of narcotic/opioid dependence; smoking; and who will be helping you get through the one or two weeks after surgery.

## Once I'm home

- Follow-up phone call with nurse practitioner next business day.
- Make sure you have a follow-up appointment with your surgeon.
- Follow wound care instructions given at discharge. Observe the operative area(s) for excessive bleeding (slow general oozing that saturates the dressing completely). Contact the surgeon's office in this case. Some drainage is normal.
- A low-grade temperature after surgery can be common but if you have a consistent fever >101 degrees; it is accompanied with red streaks around the incision; and/or you have foul-smelling discharge, please contact your surgeon.
- May shower. If you go home with an On-Q pump, wait until it is removed to shower.
- Continue use of ice as instructed.
- Take pain medications as needed (*This can include Tylenol if instructed by your surgeon*).
- Continue stool softener and drink plenty of fluids.
- Elevate legs when not exercising or walking.
- Continue to use incentive spirometry.
- Continue ankle pumps.
- Try to get up and walk for five minutes every hour that you are awake.
- Continue prescribed exercises to further improve function and reduce swelling.
- Wear sling at all times except to get dressed, take a shower, and do any exercises that your surgeon prescribed.

## Common questions once you are home

### What if I'm in severe pain?

There will certainly be some pain with this surgery as it is a major operation. But it is generally well controlled with:

1. Ice
2. Tylenol/NSAIDS with narcotic for any residual severe pain. Examples of NSAIDS include: *Motrin, Ibuprofen, Aleve*  
*If you have tried all the above modalities and your pain is still not tolerable, call your surgeon.*

### What if I get dizzy?

Lie down and drink your electrolyte fluids. Most people feel a little worn out and sometimes frankly dizzy after surgery. If you are dizzy enough that your coach is concerned, and it doesn't resolve with fluids, call your doctor. Make sure when you are moving from sitting to standing, move slowly through the transitions — sitting for a few minutes on the side of the bed first, then standing for a few minutes before you begin walking.

### What if I can't urinate?

The most common reason to stay in the hospital after surgery is if you can't urinate after surgery. This is particularly common in men and in patients who have been taking narcotics before surgery. You will need to urinate before going home, and if you can't empty your bladder we will encourage you to spend the night. Many patients can urinate only a little each time they try, and end up going to the bathroom every other hour. This is fine unless your belly starts to feel uncomfortable. *If you go 6-8 hours without being able to urinate, please call your doctor.*

### Is swelling normal?

YES! Swelling peaks around days 3-7 and may last for weeks. Though icing usually helps swelling to go down quickly, significant swelling can occur. Take this time to APPLY ICE to your joint. **DO NOT APPLY HEAT** to your joint. Contact your surgeon if swelling persists or you are concerned.

### Is bruising normal?

Yes; bruising around the incision site is normal.

It may take weeks to diminish. Do watch for red streaking around the calf area. Along with pain and warmth in the calf- these could be a sign of a blood clot. Call your surgeon if you have those three signs in the calf area.

### When can I shower?

If you go home with an On-Q pump, you may shower once it is removed (usually 3-5 days after discharge). If you do not have an On-Q pump, you may shower at any time; your dressing is waterproof. Be careful in the shower not to slip and fall.

We recommend a shower chair for this purpose. You may shower with any soap. Pat the incision dry after showering. NO tub baths, NO hot tubs, NO swimming until cleared by surgeon.

### When do I remove the dressing?

You will have a separate instruction sheet given to you at discharge that will explain when to change or remove your dressing. DO NOT put any ointments or lotions on your incision once the bandage is removed.

### If I'm having a reaction to the bandage what do I do?

Approximately 1 percent of patients have a bad allergic reaction to the bandage. If you start having issues, call your doctor. Skin irritation can occur after the removal of the bandage due to the adhesive and swelling; just watch for any signs of infection in the area. Let your surgeon know if you are concerned.

### I can't find a comfortable position to sleep.

This is very common. When patients do take a narcotic, it is most often when they are trying to sleep. You can try placing pillows to help get comfortable or sleeping in a recliner for support.

### Is numbness normal?

Numbness around the incision is normal and may persist for months following your procedure.

### When can I drive?

You can drive once you are cleared by your surgeon.

### When do I start physical therapy?

Your surgeon will let you know how soon after surgery they would like for you to start physical therapy.

## Shopping list — purchase before surgery

### Stool softener

Always use a stool softener when taking pain medications.

*Examples: Dulcolax®, Colace®, Miralax® or a generic alternative*

### Electrolyte drink

Being well-hydrated prior to surgery can improve how you feel after. Please drink plenty of fluids the day before your surgery.

*Examples: Gatorade, Powerade, G2 (diabetics)*

### Hand sanitizer

Use hand sanitizer frequently to prevent the spread of germs.

*Examples: Purell®, Dial®, or a generic alternative*

### Medical equipment

These items are available at most drugstores or on Amazon.



Hip kit



Shower chair



Bottom wiping aid



Commode riser





# Ascension Saint Thomas

To learn more,  
visit [ascension.org](https://www.ascension.org)

## **Ascension Saint Thomas Hospital Midtown Joint Replacement Institute**

2000 Church St.

Nashville, TN 37236

t 615-284-7662

## **Ascension Saint Thomas Hospital West Joint Replacement Institute**

4220 Harding Pike

Nashville, TN 37205

t 615-222-6737

© Ascension 2021. All images, photos, text and other materials are subject to copyrights owned by Ascension, or other individuals or entities which are used with their permission, and are protected by United States copyright laws. Any reproduction, retransmission, distribution or republication of all or part of any images, photos, text, and other materials is expressly prohibited without the express written approval and under the approved format of Ascension.