

TOTAL SHOULDER ARTHROPLASY

What Can I Expect?

KEVIN KO, MD

Shoulder and Elbow Surgeon

OPA Orthopedics

Seattle, WA

What is a Total Shoulder Arthroplasty?

A total shoulder arthroplasty (shoulder replacement) is a surgical procedure in which parts of an arthritic joint are replaced with a prosthesis or artificial parts. The surface of the ball (humeral head) is resurfaced with metal and the socket (glenoid) is resurfaced with a highly engineered plastic. This artificial joint is designed to move and function like a normal, healthy joint and relieve the pain associated with an arthritic joint.

How do you replace the shoulder?

The prosthesis will be placed through an incision down the front of the shoulder. The ball component is usually pressed fit securely into place while the socket will be secured with a small amount of cemented.

Length of Stay

Typically, you will spend one night 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 and unaware during the surgery. The second type of anesthesia is a nerve block which numbs the operative arm. The anesthesiologist will speak to you on the day of surgery. The ultimate choice of anesthesia technique is up to you and your anesthesiologist and any other medical risk factors that you may have.

Incision

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

Pain

All surgical procedures are associated with some discomfort and all patients perceive pain differently. In general, the pain associated with this procedure is well controlled with the pain medication that will be prescribed for you prior to discharge. However, patients who have had exposure to pain medications in the past will typically experience more post-operative pain. After the nerve block wears off you will have discomfort which was not present initially after the surgery. Taking your pain medications as prescribed will help to ease this pain.

Sling

Your arm will be placed in a sling prior to leaving the operating room. You will wear the sling at all times, including while sleeping, for the first 4 weeks. You may come out of the sling to perform your range of motion exercises.

Dressings

You will typically go home with a clear dressing across the front of your shoulder. This dressing is waterproof and you can shower immediately after the surgery. Leave the clear dressing in place until your follow-up appointment. Most of the time we are able to use dissolvable stitches so that none will need to be removed at your post-operative visit.

Physical Therapy

Before leaving the hospital you will be taught your home exercise program. For the first 6 weeks of recovery you will do these very gentle stretches at home. After the first 6 weeks you will start formal physical therapy under the guidance of a therapist.

Blood Thinners

Typically, we ask that you take aspirin for a brief period of time (4 weeks) following the surgery to help prevent blood clots unless you have an allergy or intolerance. While blood clots are not common following shoulder surgery, they can have serious side effects. If you have a history of blood clots, stronger blood thinners may be prescribed.

Restrictions

Recovery from total shoulder replacement is a minimum of three months and a full recovery can take over 6 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.

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| First 6 weeks: | No active reaching and lifting, no closing doors, no reaching behind your back, and no repetitive movements |
| 1.5-4.5 months: | No lifting greater than 10 lbs |
| After 4.5 months: | No specific restrictions |
| Long-Term: | Repetitive heaving lifting or impact is discouraged. |