Your guide to orthopedic surgery

Institutes of Quality

orthopedic care facilities
Considering orthopedic surgery?

Maybe you’ve suffered an injury to a knee or hip. Maybe you’ve been dealing with joint pain for months or even years. Perhaps you’ve had chronic issues with your back or neck.

Except in severe cases, most orthopedic surgeons don’t want you to rush in to surgery. There are several levels of treatment to explore first. But if these remedies don’t work, you and your doctor may agree the time is right for orthopedic surgery.

We created this guide for you, if you’re 18 and over, to help you prepare for and recover from orthopedic surgery, so you can get back to living your life.
Orthopedic surgery can make life better for so many patients. But everybody is different. It’s important to understand your surgery, the risks and how your body can best heal.

**Do your homework.** Hospitals or surgeons often have classes to explain the types of surgery. Attending one will help you understand the risks and benefits. Bring a friend or family member as your health care advocate, when possible.

**Ask questions.** It’s your right to ask questions so you understand the surgery.

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<th>Why this procedure? Are there alternatives?</th>
<th>What are the benefits of this procedure in terms of pain relief and functioning/mobility? How long will the benefits last?</th>
<th>What are the risks? What is the success rate for this procedure?</th>
<th>What percentage of patients improve following the procedure?</th>
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<td>What if I don’t have the surgery now?</td>
<td>What pain relief or pain control measures will I be given?</td>
<td>How long will the recovery take? What will my limitations be?</td>
<td>Will I have any disability following surgery? Will I need physical therapy?</td>
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**Count on your secure member website.** It is also a great resource. Just visit [www.aetna.com](http://www.aetna.com). When you log in, select “Making decisions about your health? Learn more about treatment options from Emmi.” There you can learn more about working with your doctor, understanding treatment options, making confident choices and navigating the surgery process for better results.
Get the quality you deserve

Seek facilities known for quality care. As an Aetna member, you have a special network of hospitals and other facilities that specialize in certain orthopedic procedures. We call them our Institutes of Quality facilities.

Facilities earn Institutes of Quality status for showing high levels of quality and efficiency for certain orthopedic procedures like total joint replacement and spinal surgery. We measure many factors like the level of care patients receive, how often patients return to the hospital after surgery and more.

Visit our DocFind® online directory to find Institutes of Quality orthopedic care facilities and specialists who have privileges at these hospitals.°

°Review your plan documents to find out if you are required to use an Institutes of Quality facility.
Prepare for surgery

Once you’ve decided to proceed, there are steps you must take to use your coverage more effectively. They can also lead to more positive outcomes.

**Check your plan documents.** See if your health insurance or health benefits plan covers orthopedic surgery. Also, understand the costs you’re responsible for based on your benefits, and learn if the hospital and surgeon you choose will affect your coverage.

**Get evaluations.** You might be required to get several evaluations:

- Medical
- Nutritional and dietary
- Behavioral health

**Complete all paperwork.** Work with your surgeon and the office staff to get prior approval from your health insurance company before you have the surgery. Make sure all required paperwork is completed. This ensures that you can use your plan coverage efficiently.

Depending on your plan, an Aetna nurse may call you before or after your procedure if it requires admission to the hospital.

**Plan for the future.** Exercise and lifestyle changes are important for your best outcomes. Talk with your doctor, nutritionist or dietitian about these changes.
Ask questions along the way. If you’re unsure of what your plan covers or have other questions about your upcoming surgery, you can get information by:

• Having a chat with Ask Ann, your virtual assistant, through your Aetna Navigator® secure member website
• Calling the number on the back of your Aetna ID card

Get work and home life in order:

• Check with your doctor about physical limitations after surgery.
• Ask family and friends for help with driving and chores.
• Schedule time off work with your employer.
• Make sure you have the phone numbers of your family, friends and pharmacy in your cell phone or on a list.
Plan for life after surgery

Before you head home, get the information you need to take care of yourself.

**Rehab faithfully.** If you’re having joint replacement or spinal surgery, physical therapy will most likely be a crucial part of your healing process. Make the commitment to stick with it to restore the normal function of your joints.

**Understand your prescription drugs.** Get written prescriptions in hand before leaving the hospital. Or confirm they were called in to your pharmacy. If you are an Aetna Pharmacy member, you can check the price of your prescriptions in Aetna Navigator.

**Ask questions:**

- **What is each drug for?**
- **How and when do I take each drug?**
- **What are possible side effects?**
- **Should I avoid taking other drugs or eating certain foods with these prescriptions?**

**Use your prescriptions.** Make sure to fill your prescriptions for drugs and supplies ordered by the doctor. For supplies and equipment, go to a home health store or pharmacy. Be sure to check our online directory through your member website to locate network pharmacies and other facilities in your area.
**Take precautions against falls.** Surgery and post-operative medicine can make even the strongest of us feel unsteady. And serious falls can occur when we try to be too independent too soon. Also, be sure to wear nonskid shoes before getting up. Turn on lights while moving around at night. Securely lock wheelchairs before getting in or out. Finally, don’t feel ashamed to rely on caregivers.

**Know your treatment plans.** Put your discharge instructions and your doctor’s and pharmacy’s phone numbers in a place where they’re easy to find. If you don’t understand the instructions, call your doctor.

**Attend a support group.** You may find it helpful to share your experience with others who have had the surgery. Your doctor, a local hospital or the Internet can help you find a support group.

**Schedule appointments.** Call to make follow-up visits and appointments for lab tests with your surgeon or other health care providers.
Get back to being a healthier you

Log in to your secure member website at www.aetna.com.

Click on “Find a Doctor, Dentist or Facility” to access the online directory.