

## Frequently Asked Questions – Joint Replacement Rehabilitation

- Q** What is the difference between acute and subacute rehabilitation for joint replacement?
- A** Subacute rehabilitation is the level of service usually provided in nursing homes. About ten years ago, Helen Hayes Hospital, in response to the growing trend of commercial payers authorizing subacute rehabilitation for orthopedic conditions, established one unit in the Hospital as a subacute unit. The subacute unit at Helen Hayes Hospital offers an alternative to a nursing home stay for those patients who wish to receive services in a rehabilitation hospital setting. The unit is staffed with registered nurses on every shift, a physician is onsite 24/7, and there are laboratory and pharmacy on-site as well. The primary difference between acute and subacute at Helen Hayes Hospital is in the amount of therapy. The subacute service provides approximately one hour of physical and occupational therapy five days per week, about half of the therapy time provided on the acute units.
- Q** What determines whether I am admitted to an acute or to a subacute unit following joint replacement?
- A** In general, if you can bear weight on the affected leg and participate in a full therapy program, Helen Hayes Hospital would accept you to an acute unit. Insurances, however, have different criteria for determining medical necessity. Many commercial plans will authorize only a subacute level of care for a single joint replacement.
- Q** According to my insurance company, I have a benefit for acute rehabilitation. Does that mean I will be authorized for an acute unit following my joint replacement?
- A** Not necessarily. Insurance authorization will depend on whether you meet the company's criteria for acute rehabilitation. Having the benefit does not mean that your insurer will consider acute rehabilitation medically necessary.
- Q** How long will I be at Helen Hayes Hospital after my joint replacement?
- A** Most single joint replacement patients can go home within a week of admission to Helen Hayes Hospital. Patients having bilateral joint replacements, those over 85 years of age, or who have other serious medical conditions, may stay a little longer. If you have a commercial insurance provider, the insurance case manager will determine how many days the company will authorize payment. Your Helen Hayes Hospital case manager will meet with you, soon after admission, to discuss the rehabilitation team's recommendation for expected length of stay and any concerns you may have regarding your insurance coverage.
- Q** Does Helen Hayes Hospital provide CPM (continuous passive movement) machines?
- A** Yes, CPM machines are available, however each surgeon has their own protocol. If your surgeon requests a CPM machine, we will provide it.
- Q** Can the doctor at Helen Hayes Hospital remove my staples?
- A** Staples are generally removed 10 to 14 days after surgery. If you are still an inpatient during that time, and your surgeon's protocol permits, your staples will be removed at Helen Hayes Hospital. If

not, you may return to your surgeon or arrange to return to Helen Hayes Hospital to have them removed.

**Q** Will I be able to shower?

**A** Each surgeon has a different protocol with regard to showering and getting the suture line wet. Some surgeons prefer that you do not get the suture line wet until the staples have been removed. If this is your surgeon's preference, showering may not be an option until the staples are removed. If your surgeon allows, you will be able to shower during your stay at Helen Hayes Hospital. Either way, the hospital's nursing staff can assist you with bathing options.

**Q** How will I continue my therapy after discharge?

**A** Most patients, after completing rehabilitation at Helen Hayes Hospital, are able to continue their therapy as an outpatient. Your Helen Hayes Hospital physician will give you a prescription for 6 to 8 weeks for outpatient therapy and you can choose your own therapy provider and make appointments on your own.

If you need to continue therapy at home, and meet Medicare or your commercial insurer's criteria for home care, your Helen Hayes Hospital case manager will provide you with a list of home care agencies in your area and will set up services with the provider you choose.

**Q** Do I need to bring my own medications to the Hospital?

**A** Helen Hayes Hospital will receive a list of your medications from the hospital where you have your surgery, and our pharmacy will provide them for you during your stay. Occasionally, our pharmacy will not have a particular medication on our formulary. In these cases, we will substitute with an equivalent drug or you may provide us with your own medication. If you provide the medication, it must be in the original prescription bottle, and once approved by our pharmacist, we will be happy to dispense it with your other ordered medications.