

Shoulder replacement

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The problem:

Arthritis of the shoulder joint with a rotator cuff that is not torn.

Reason for treatment:

Pain and stiffness.

The treatment:

Surgery is done with an open incision about 5-9 inches in length. The incision is on the front of the shoulder. Most muscles are separated, but one muscle, called the subscapularis, is cut to gain access to the shoulder joint. The arthritic surfaces of the ball (humeral head) and socket (glenoid) are cut away. The ball is replaced with a metal ball sitting on a metal stem. This stem is held in place by fitting it tightly into the humerus bone shaft. The socket is replaced with polyethylene (plastic). This is held in place with an epoxy (bone cement). After this is done, the subscapularis muscle is repaired.

Day of surgery:

The patient arrives 2 hours before the procedure to meet the operative team. A catheter is placed in their vein (IV) and the patient is given a nerve block. The nerve block helps with pain after the surgery for approximately 12 hours. The patient is still put to sleep during the surgery. The surgery itself takes one to two hours, but the setup time in the operating room and the takedown time adds one half hour to an hour. The surgery is done with the patient in the sitting position, so care is taken to position the patient appropriately. The patient stays in the recovery room for 1-2 hours. Most patients stay in the hospital for one or two nights for pain control after the surgery.

After surgery:

The patient wears a sling for 4 weeks. The patient keeps the wound dry for 7 days. Sponge baths are appropriate. The sling is removed only to take a bath or shower and when sitting standing while awake and away from crowds. It should always be worn when asleep. Physical therapy is started at the first postoperative visit and continues for 3 months. Recovery is usually complete at 6 months.

The shoulder is very painful for several days and is uncomfortable for several weeks. Pain is managed with ice and narcotic pain medication. Narcotic pain medication is stopped by the sixth week after surgery. Anti-inflammatory medication may be started at 4-6 weeks if needed.

The metal from the surgery may cause metal detectors to go off. This is not very common and is usually not a problem in airports. Also, once a patient has had replacement surgery, they always need antibiotics before any procedure is done on other parts of their body, including dental work. Please consult my office or your other doctors at the time of the procedure to have the antibiotics prescribed.