

Reverse Total Shoulder Arthroplasty

What is a Reverse Total Shoulder Arthroplasty?

A reverse 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 plastic while the socket (glenoid) is resurfaced with a metal ball. This is the reverse configuration of a normal joint. This artificial joint is designed to move like a normal, healthy joint, even with a torn rotator cuff.

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 fixed with screws while the stem component is press fit into place. Sometimes cement is used.

Length of Stay

You will spend 1 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. The second type of anesthesia is a nerve block. Your arm will be numb and will feel very strange. Sometimes a nerve catheter is placed which can numb your arm up to 3 days after surgery. The anesthesiologist will speak to you on the day of surgery. The ultimate choice of anesthesia technique is up to you and your anesthesiologist.

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

After the nerve block wears off you will have discomfort in the shoulder. You will have pain medication prescribed for you prior to discharge. Most patients say that their arthritis pain was worse than their surgical pain.

Sling

Your arm will be placed in a pillow sling prior to leaving the operating room. Your surgeon will tell you when it is safe to come out of the sling.

Dressings

You will go home with dressings that may be removed 3 days after your surgery. There will be steri-strips over the incisions. The steri-strips are to remain in place until they fall off on their own. Most patients will have dissolvable stitches under the skin. The incision should be kept dry for 5 days after surgery.

Physical Therapy

Formal physical therapy after a reverse shoulder replacement is not always needed. Your surgeon will give you stretching exercises to be done at home. Physical therapy can be helpful to regain your shoulder strength. The length of time needed for physical therapy is different for every patient.

Driving

You may drive when you feel that you can properly control a car and you are **NOT** taking narcotic pain medication. This typically occurs at 6 weeks after surgery.

Recovery time

Recovery from reverse total shoulder replacement is three months. During that time you will have little restrictions on the use of your operative arm. Immediate use of the arm is permitted for normal, everyday activities without lifting of heavy objects.