

Joint replacement and oral hygiene:

You will surely ask yourself: what does my mouth have to do with my hip or knee replacement? The answer is very simple: Your mouth, your hip and your knee form part of a single unit which is yourself.

To have proper dental hygiene is important for everybody, but more so for patients about to undergo hip or knee replacement. Oral hygiene is even more important in those patients who already have an artificial joint.

The normal bacterial flora that exists in everybody's mouth can contribute to the development of dental cavities and in persons with other predisposing factors such as diabetes and other diseases that weaken the immune system, it can also lead to the development of a periodontal abscess.

The microorganisms responsible for the development of periodontal abscesses can easily penetrate the blood stream and travel to any part of the body, quickly lodging in any part, including the knees or hips. This could lead to a severe infection of the hip or knee prosthesis. Due to this important matter we make the following recommendations:

Before your hip or knee replacement procedure:

- We usually recommend a preoperative oral evaluation by your attending dentist a few weeks before surgery so he/she can detect the presence of cavities, periodontal abscesses or severe gingivitis that will require preoperative treatment to eradicate infection. Don't forget to keep your orthopaedic surgeon informed.
- Remember to follow all recommendations of dental hygiene made by your dentist such as regular tooth brushing and flossing. If you have a dental prosthesis remember that they also need special hygienic care.
- Keep in mind that any infectious process in your mouth (or in any part of your body and this includes genitourinary tract and fungal infections) can influence negatively in the result of your hip or knee replacement because there is an increased risk of infection of the prosthesis. That is why it is better to take care of any infections a few weeks beforehand.
- Ideally your orthopaedic surgeon and your dentist have to be in touch to take the best decisions for your benefit.

If you already have a prosthetic hip or knee:

- Try to maintain proper dental hygiene, including regular biannual visits to your dentist for a check up .
- If your dentist is going to perform any oral or dental procedure it is your responsibility to remind him/her that you have a knee/hip replacement. It will be in his/her best judgement to administer antibiotics before and

after the procedure if he thinks that there will be risk of bacteraemia (presence of bacteria in the blood stream during the procedure) to diminish the risk of infecting your hip/knee prosthesis. If there is any doubt about prophylaxis and treatment please make sure your dentist gets in touch with your orthopaedic surgeon so that they can both decide

what's best for you. Remember that there are other risk factors such as diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, malnutrition, use of steroids, immunologic deficiencies etc.

- The usual oral procedures that can cause bacteraemia and need the regular use of antibiotics are:
 - Dental extractions
 - Gum surgery
 - Periodontal procedures
 - Dental prosthetic implantation
 - Root canal surgery
 - Braces
 - Injection of local anaesthetics
 - Dental cleaning that causes moderate bleeding

Do not self - medicate; your dentist and/or your orthopaedic surgeon know best and they will determine which antibiotic is best for you including dosage and treatment time.

Maintaining an adequate oral hygiene can positively influence the short, medium and long term outcome of your hip or knee replacement. If you have any doubts or questions, please don't hesitate to contact us - remember we are here to help you.

Dr. Stefan Martínez van Gils & Dr. Isaac Cervantes.

NOTE: The main reason for the above information is to aid patients. We are not responsible for the decisions made by patients without previously consulting their attending physician.