

# The Importance of Lifetime Visits



Over the past 40 years and after performing thousands of joint replacements, the staff at Mercy has discovered that many people are not following up with their orthopedic surgeon on a regular basis. The reason for this may be that they do not realize they are supposed to, or they do not understand why it is important. So, when should you follow-up? These are some general rules:

- Periodic visits as instructed by your surgeon
- Anytime you have mild pain for more than a week
- Anytime you have moderate or severe pain that requires medication
- Anytime that you notice signs or symptoms of infection

## There are two good reasons for follow-up visits with your orthopedic surgeon:

- If you have a cemented hip or knee, we need to evaluate the integrity of the cement. With time and stress, cement may crack. You probably would be unaware of this happening, because it usually happens slowly over time. This typically does not occur in the first 10 years, but it occasionally can. After 10 years of use, the incidence is greater. Seeing a crack in cement does not necessarily mean you need another surgery, but it does mean we need to follow things more closely. Why? Two things could happen. Your hip or knee could become loose and this might lead to pain. Or, the cracked cement could cause a reaction in the bone, called “osteolysis”, which may cause the bone to thin out. In both cases, you might not know this for years. Orthopaedists are constantly learning more about how to deal with both of these problems. The sooner we know about potential problems, the better chance we have of avoiding problems that are more serious.
- The second reason for follow-up is that the plastic liner in your knee or hip may wear. Little wear particles may get in the bone and cause osteolysis, similar to what can happen with cement. Again, this may cause the bone to thin out. Replacing a worn liner early can keep this from happening. X-rays will be taken at your follow-up visits, which will help detect these potential problems. The new X-rays will be compared with your older films to make these determinations.

We are happy that most patients are doing so well that they do not think of us often. However, we enjoy seeing you and want to continue to provide you with the best care and advice. If you are unsure how long it has been or when your next visit should be scheduled, please call your surgeon. He or she will be delighted to hear from you.

Thank you for choosing Mercy Medical Center. It is a privilege to provide you with the utmost amount of reverence, integrity, care and excellence during your total joint replacement surgery. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions or concerns.

### **Best Regards,**

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