

Antibiotic Prophylaxis (Infection Prevention) After a Total Joint Replacement

Because of the large amount of metal and plastic in a total joint replacement, and because of the manner in which bacteria work, your total joint is theoretically at risk for developing an infection if you have any dental or surgical procedures.

The use of antibiotics prior to dental procedures has become more controversial in recent years. There has never been a study that has proven that taking antibiotics prior to dental work lessens the rate of infections in your artificial joint.

The current recommendations are that if you do NOT have any of the issues noted below you do NOT need antibiotics before dental procedures. You do NOT need antibiotics prior to colonoscopy either.

Patients with the highest risk for infection of a total joint replacement include those with:

- Diabetes (even diet controlled) or Pre-diabetes
- Rheumatoid Arthritis or any similar disease (Lupus, etc.....)
- Any other immune system related disease (Crohns, Inflammatory Bowel disease, HIV)
- Cancer (except for simple skin cancers)
- Severe scarring in or around the joint in question
- Radiation treatment to the joint in question
- Previous infection of the joint in question.

If you have any of the problems noted above, you SHOULD have antibiotics prior to dental work for LIFETIME. This recommendation also lacks scientific support, but is thought to still be the safest course to take given the minimal risk of taking a single dose of antibiotics and the enormous impact an infected joint replacement can have on your life.

For some of you, these recommendations will be a change from what you have been told previously. It is likely they will change again as more evidence is produced over time to make a solid scientific decision on the issue.

If you have any questions about this or any other issue, please feel free to speak to Dr. Olsen or any of the orthopedic staff about your concerns. We can be reached at 952-993-3230 at all hours.

Thank you for putting your trust in us to provide you with world class orthopedic care. Please do not hesitate to make any suggestions about how we might improve our service to you or your family.