

Shoulder Implant Removal — Pre-Operative Patient Guide

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Infected Shoulder Replacement (Periprosthetic Joint Infection) — Implant Removal and Antibiotic Spacer

Your Condition & Procedure

The condition

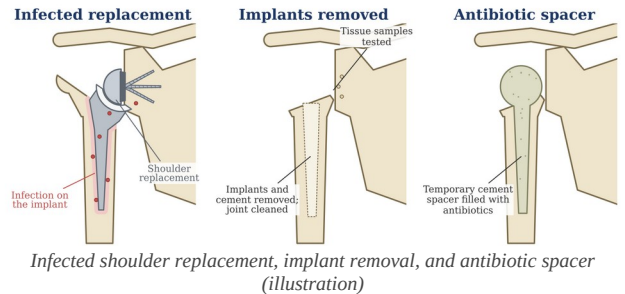
A **prosthetic joint infection** happens when bacteria settle on a shoulder replacement, sometimes months or years after surgery. It can cause pain, stiffness, wound drainage, redness, or fever. Bacteria form a protective film on the implant, so the infection usually cannot be cured with antibiotics alone.

The surgery

This is usually the first of two surgeries. Through your prior incision, the infected implants and cement are removed, the joint is thoroughly cleaned, and tissue samples are sent to identify the bacteria. A temporary **antibiotic spacer** is placed. After a course of antibiotics, a new replacement (**reimplantation**) is planned; occasionally the spacer stays long term. The final plan is determined during surgery.

Risks & benefits

Benefits: Removing the infected implants and placing antibiotics in the joint give the best chance of clearing the infection. **Risks** are uncommon and include infection, blood clots, infection that persists or returns, spacer dislocation or breakage, fracture of the arm bone or shoulder blade, side effects of long-term antibiotics, wound-healing problems, injury to nearby structures (such as nerves or blood vessels), stiffness, persistent pain, and the need for further surgery. These will be reviewed with you in detail before surgery.



Before Surgery

- **Medications:** We will tell you what to stop and when (e.g., blood thinners, anti-inflammatories, some supplements, weight-loss injections).
- **Fasting:** Follow the instructions from your surgery coordinator/facility. In general, you should have nothing to eat or drink starting at midnight the night before surgery.
- **Nicotine:** Stop all nicotine products—they slow healing.
- **Equipment:** A sling is typically provided at or before surgery.
- **Physical therapy:** Schedule your first visit for within about a week after surgery.
- **Home:** Plan for a helper for the first few days. Many patients sleep more comfortably in a recliner or propped up on pillows at first.
- **Medical history:** Let us know if you or anyone in your family has a history of blood clot disorders or a malignant hyperthermia reaction to anesthesia.
- **Health:** Call us if you develop a fever, illness, or skin problem near the shoulder.

Day of Surgery

- If instructed, take blood pressure/heart medications with a small sip of water.
- Arrive at the time given by your surgery coordinator.
- Bring your medication list, insurance card, photo ID, and sling if you have them.
- Wear a loose, button-front shirt; leave jewelry and valuables at home.
- A responsible adult must drive you home. You may **not** drive yourself.

Immediately After Surgery

- You will recover in the recovery area; many patients stay in the hospital for one or more nights.
- Your surgeon will discuss the procedure with you and your support person.
- Your care team will review wound care, restrictions, medications, follow-up, and warning signs before discharge.

Milestone	What to Expect After Surgery (General Timeline)
Sling	Worn for 4 weeks, off for exercises and hygiene, and weaned by 6 weeks (full time for 6 weeks if the spacer needs extra protection).
Daily life	Elbow, wrist, and hand motion right away. For 6 weeks: lift only 1 lb; no pushing up from a chair or bed or reaching behind your back. No driving while taking narcotic pain medication.
Motion & lifting	Gentle therapist-guided shoulder motion begins right away. From 6 weeks: lifting up to 2–3 lb and light use below shoulder height. Motion is often limited with a spacer.
Antibiotics	IV antibiotics continue after you go home, typically for several weeks. Report new wound drainage, redness, or fever the same day.
Next stage	A new replacement is typically planned 6–12 weeks later, once the infection has cleared. If the spacer is kept, lifting stays at 5 lb or less long term.
► Please note: This is a general guide only. Detailed post-operative instructions will be provided on the day of surgery, and your restrictions and timeline may change based on the findings and procedures performed.	

Learn More

We **strongly recommend** reading these pages from the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (OrthoInfo) before your surgery:

- **Your condition: Joint Replacement Infection** — <https://orthoinfo.org/en/diseases--conditions/joint-replacement-infection/>
- **Related reading: Reverse Total Shoulder Replacement** — <https://orthoinfo.org/en/treatment/reverse-total-shoulder-replacement/>

Video: You may find a video demonstrating an example (not the exact technique) of your surgery at <https://patient.orthopediatrics.com/student/catalog>.

Questions before surgery? Call our office at (972) 378-1438. For a medical emergency, call 911.