

Returning to Sexual Activity following Joint Replacement Surgery

Frequently asked questions

Will I be able to have sex after my joint replacement?

Yes! While many people don't feel like participating in sexual activity while recovering from joint replacement surgery, the pain and stiffness from arthritis can affect sexual activity even before surgery. Many people's sex lives improve after surgery because after the joint heals, it is usually free of the pain and stiffness that may have previously affected sexual activity.

When can I return to sexual activity after my joint replacement?

As soon as you feel ready and comfortable and the incision is healed. This is often around 4 – 6 weeks after surgery but this is a very individual decision.

Will being sexually active damage my new joint?

Joint precautions must be followed for the first 3 months after surgery to allow the soft tissue around the new joint to heal. However, it is still possible to be sexually active while maintaining joint precautions. After the first 3 months there is little concern about damaging the new joint.

Points to consider after surgery

You and your partner may need to plan ahead for sexual activity and consider trying some new positions. It is important to maintain joint precautions.

As you may have less energy right after joint replacement surgery, plan ahead to pace your activities and make time for sexual activity when you won't be tired. To minimize pain, try positions where your partner takes the more active role, at least at first.

Joint Precautions

For the first three months after your joint replacement it is very important to maintain your joint precautions.

The following diagrams are suggested sexual positions for after hip surgery but most will work after knee surgery too. The most important thing to avoid after knee surgery is kneeling directly on the operated knee.

Hip Precautions

- Do not bend your operated hip more than 90°
- Do not cross your legs
- Do not twist at the hips or allow the operated leg to roll in or out

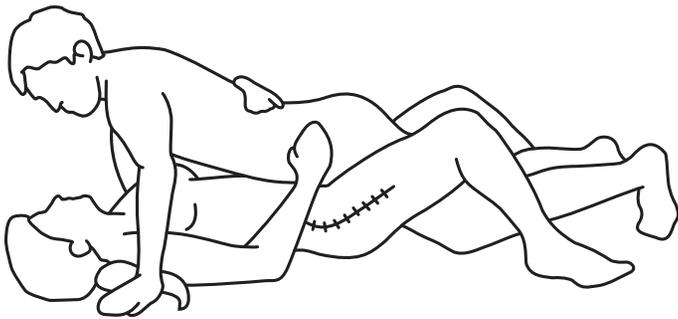
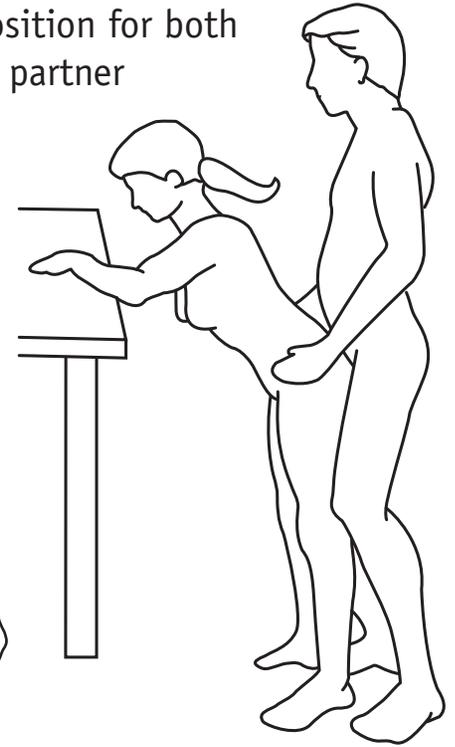
Knee Precautions

- Do not kneel directly on the operated knee
- Do not squat
- Do not twist the operated knee

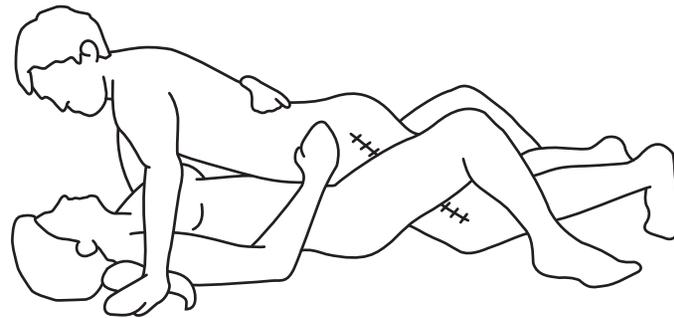


Approved Positions

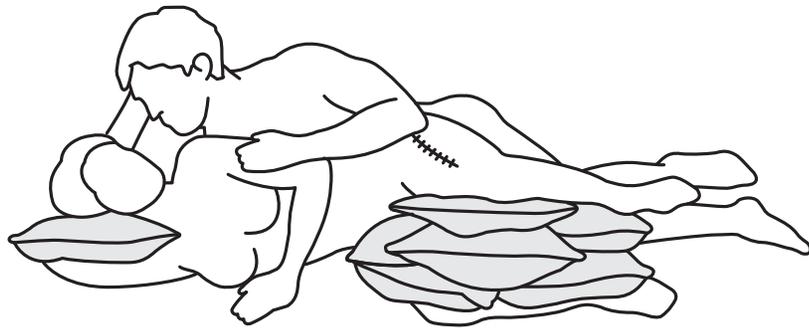
Standing position for both patient and partner



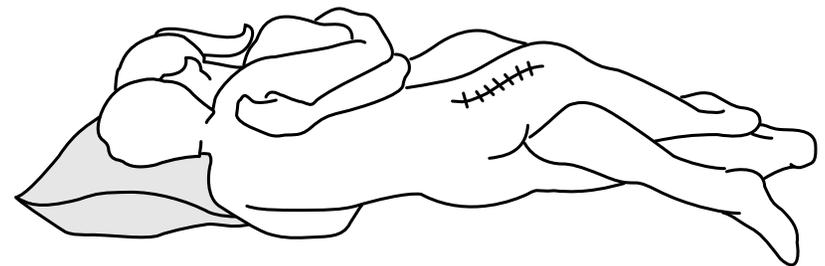
Patient on the bottom: partner on the top



Patient on the top: partner on the bottom
(avoid after knee surgery; too much kneeling
on operated knee)



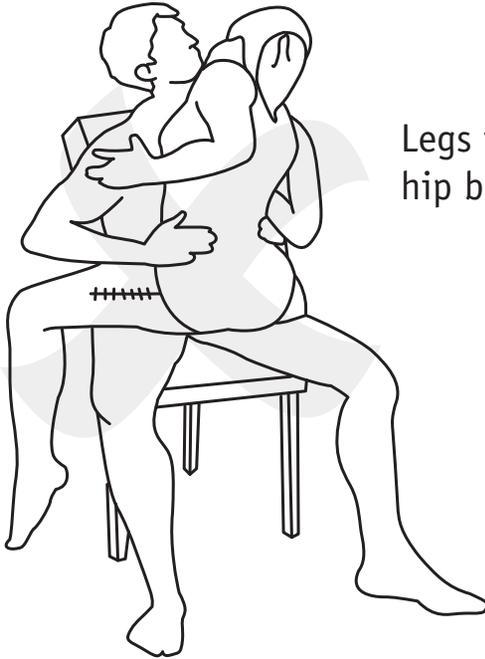
Pillows can be used under the knees, back
and/or side for comfort and support



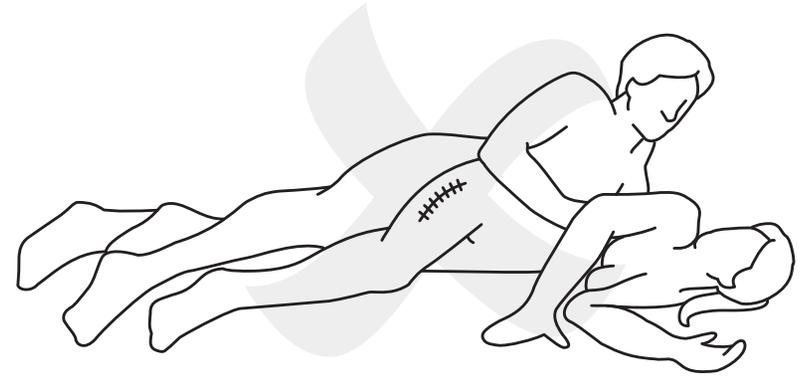
Patient lying on side with operated
leg on top



Positions to Avoid after Hip Surgery

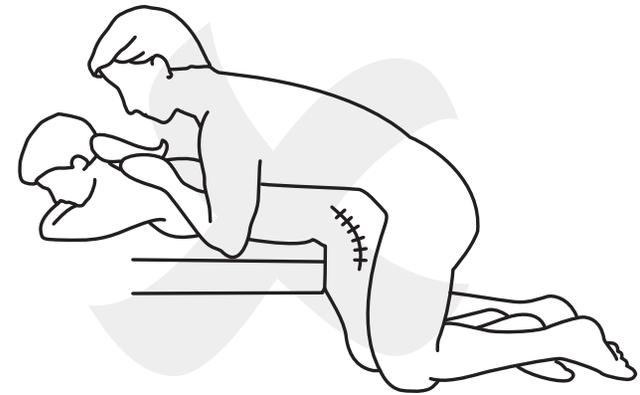
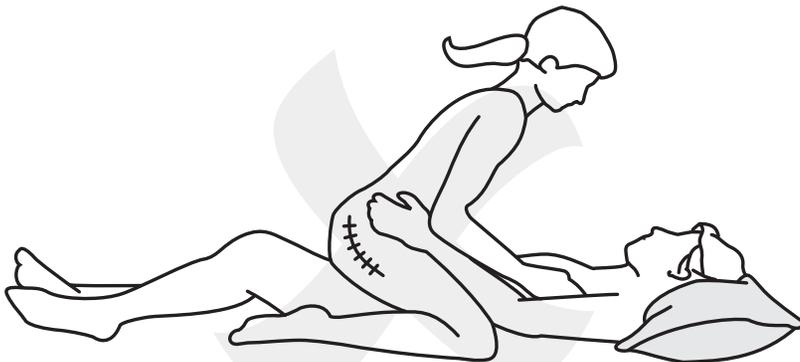


Legs too far apart; too much hip bending and twisting



Too much hip twisting

Too much hip bending



Too much hip bending

Resources

Sexuality & arthritis:

- Intimacy & Arthritis

Available through The Arthritis Society by calling 1-866-414-7766 or online at www.arthritis.ca

Sexual activity after joint replacement surgery:

- About Joints: Information for Patients

Available online at www.aboutjoints.com

For more copies, go online at <http://vch.eduhealth.ca> or email pchem@vch.ca and quote Catalogue No. **GA.130.S491**

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