

The following testimonial was thoughtfully submitted by a patient that we were privileged to treat at the Orthopedic Institute of Wisconsin. Her name is Geraldine Biehl and she has the unique perspective of being a nurse that has undergone reverse shoulder replacement surgery on both shoulders due to large rotator cuff tears and arthritis. Even though her surgeries were reverse shoulder replacements her list should prove to be quite helpful to patients in trying to determine the recovery process necessary that follows surgery. Thank you Mrs. Biehl for your thoughts!

COPING WITH A SHOULDER REPLACEMENT

SUGGESTIONS FROM A FORMER PATIENT (WITH BOTH SHOULDERS REPLACED)

Before Surgery:

Train yourself to eat with your opposite hand, toilet yourself, and do your chores.

Practice buttoning shirts and dressing yourself; also, pulling up pants, etc. If you are using a cane, try to get along using your opposite hand, if this is okay with your doctor.

Re: Planning your Wardrobe:

Wear large, loose shirts (buttoned) when possible. (Borrow your husband's, if necessary.)

Sweat pants or elastic-waist pants are easier to deal with. (Lands End has a nice selection of knit pants that are a little dressier.)

A good pair of sneakers is recommended. A long handled shoe horn, and elastic shoe laces will also come in handy.

(Special Tips for Women☺)

Re: underclothes

Bras should open in the front. Many are reasonably priced online.

For larger women JMS is a good source. Get two or three.

They can be washed at night. You won't want to wear a bra for at least two weeks because of discomfort at the incision.

Plain cotton panties are best.

Entertainment:

You will have a lot of downtime, so plan for this in advance.

Attain enough DVDs, books, music, radio, T.V. guide, etc. for at least six weeks. If you are a puzzle fan, keep the crosswords, Sudoku, etc. at hand.

Also keep a telephone, phone book, pad of paper and pen by your CPM chair.

Many drug stores sell a small table that tilts for reading and has a stable section (that does not tilt) for your telephone, remotes, beverages, etc.) They cost about \$25.

CPM (Continuous Passive Motion) Chair:

This chair is critical to your recovery. It will be delivered to your home prior to surgery. It is easy to use, and the person who delivers it will set it up and give you instructions. Ask him or her anything you don't understand and use it when the person is there. Don't be afraid to ask them to "tweak" it, if you are not comfortable. (They will give you a folder with instructions and a number where they can be reached if you have further questions.) They are very patient and pleasant, so do not be afraid to call.

After surgery you will need help getting on and off the chair for two to three weeks. By then you should be confident and independent. It's also nice to have a visitor. It helps pass the time.

You will be required to spend four hours a day for six weeks on this machine. After that, you will attend physical therapy for at least four to six weeks. When you are on the CPM chair, you can split the four hours into one or one and one-half hour segments. While you are sitting in the chair, there will be a machine that circulates cold water through a cuff that is wrapped around your shoulder. At the same time, you will wear boots that alternate pressure on your legs. You may get cold, so have a sweater and a small blanket nearby.

Physical Therapy:

The doctor has done his job with surgery. Now you are responsible for getting your shoulder well. If you want the best results from your surgery, you must be faithful with your PT (physical therapy) exercises. Don't be lazy. Do the exercises every day as directed. The doctor can only do so much. The rest is up to you. You've come this far.

DON'T GIVE UP NOW!