

Traveling After Surgery

When is it safe to fly after orthopedic surgery?

It is safe to travel after orthopedic surgery, just discuss with your physician the acceptable timeframe to wait until doing so. If the surgery was done within the last 6 weeks, you should discuss with your surgeon if any particular treatment for the prevention of blood clots is recommended.

Will I set off the alarms at the airport?

Smartphones and coins may set off sensitive metal detectors at airport security checkpoints. Many commonly used orthopedic implants may also set off the metal detectors. A card or letter from your physician is no longer needed for identification of implants.

If you or a family member has a metal implant, he or she should inform a Transportation Security Officer before screening begins. You will not be exempt from additional screening.

Many patients now prefer to be screened by imaging technology (X-ray Machine) to reduce the likelihood of a pat-down being necessary. If a pat-down is selected by the TSA, it will be helpful to wear clothes that allow you to easily reveal your surgical scar.

Any recommendations for safe traveling after a joint replacement?

- Allow additional time while traveling for screening
- Wear appropriate shoes or sneakers to aid in preventing falls
- Most airports are large and require significant walking to get from the terminal entrance to your gate. If you walk with an assistance device (cane, walker, etc.) and find it difficult walking long distances, consider asking for wheelchair assistance.
- Recent surgery is a risk factor for blood clots as is prolonged sitting and dehydration. Make sure to drink water on your flight and get up and move around every few hours.
 - Compression stockings can help prevent swelling in your legs and decrease the risk of blood clots.