

# Caring for the Carer

Your guide to caring for someone having  
a hip or knee replacement



eBook



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# How to help someone prepare for hip or knee replacement surgery

Getting a hip or knee replacement can be both exciting and frightening at the same time. The surgery can help your loved one get back to enjoying the things they love pain-free, however they will likely go through a mix of emotions in the lead up.

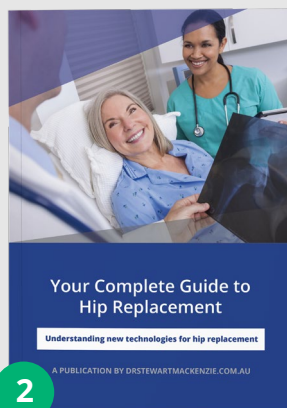
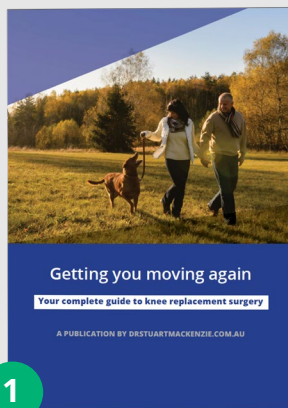
Try these tips to help you and your loved one feel more confident about the upcoming surgery:

## Knowledge is power

Gather as much information as you can about the surgery and the recovery process as possible. It will help you care better and answer any questions your loved one has.

You might be interested in our ebooks:

1. "Getting you moving again - Your complete eguide to knee replacement surgery"
2. "Your complete guide to hip replacement"
3. "Robotic-Assisted surgery - Understanding new technologies for hip and knee replacement surgery"



## **Mental preparation**

Preparing for any surgery can be a bit of a roller coaster. Help your loved one relax by distracting them from the surgery – take them to visit family and friends and encourage them to do activities they love and to take time to relax.

## **Remind them of the reasons for the surgery**

If they have any doubts ahead of their hip or knee replacement, remind them that surgery will help give them a new lease on life and get them back to doing the things they love again.

## **Get in shape**

It might be important that your loved one gets into the best state of health ahead of surgery. Following the surgeon's advice will help the surgery and recovery go much more smoothly. The best thing you can do is to support the process and even lead a healthier lifestyle with him/her.

## **Make sure your loved one is ok**

Keep an eye on your loved one and seek help if something doesn't seem right about his/her behaviour.

## **Monitor any necessary lifestyle changes**

If the surgeon advises your loved one to stop taking specific medications in the lead up to surgery, make sure they are staying on track by checking in with their needs.

## **Be prepared**

Find out how long recovery will take and be informed on what your loved one might require during recovery, such as medication, changing bandages, cleaning wounds and required equipment. Consult the doctor about medication and fill any prescriptions you can prior to surgery. He/she may also advise some over-the-counter pain medication available for you to purchase.

# Preparing the home for recovery

During recovery at home after a knee or hip replacement, your loved one will need to rest and be careful with the new limb. There are a few things you can do to make recovery at home easier for him/her as well as for you:

- Create a recovery space with a sturdy chair or bed surrounded by everything your loved one might need throughout the day, e.g. the TV remote, water, snacks, the telephone and a good book.
- If necessary, purchase assistive devices to help make everyday tasks easier, such as a shoehorn or non-slip shower mat.
- De-clutter and remove any trip hazards in the home, such as loose wires, cords and rugs. Consider finding another place for small pets to stay to reduce trip hazards.
- Install handrails near staircases, in the shower and near the toilet if it will make mobility easier for your loved one.

## How long does recovery take?

Usually your loved one won't spend more than three to five days in hospital. Most of the time your loved one will be fairly independent around the house by two or three weeks following the surgery. Full recovery post-surgery can take between three to six months, depending on their needs.



# Preparing yourself for caregiving

It's not uncommon to feel overwhelmed or torn about the information available to you in the lead up to a caregiving role. Planning ahead is a luxury that many caregivers wish for and one that you have within your grasp. Creating a plan to provide care for your loved one before and after their surgery will help you feel more organised and confident and make the process much smoother for you both.

Make sure to:

**Create an agreement** that covers the level of support you can reasonably provide to your loved one, such as days/times that you will be available to help. Tell your loved one exactly what you can do, for how long and how often you can do it. It's important to set boundaries so you can still enjoy time for you and with your family.

**Have an open conversation with your loved one** about his/her needs and concerns, as well as about medications and any other requirements they already have for their wellbeing. This will help you stay on top of your loved one's health needs.

**Gather information so you feel confident and prepared.**

Ask the surgeon if you have any questions or require information. Feel informed on what the patient might require, such as medication, assistance with mobility, etc.

**Look into your options at work.** Are you able to change your working hours to better provide for your loved one? Is carer's leave available? Or does your workplace offer job sharing, working remotely or working extra hours during the days that you can make it into the office?

**Be the strong one.** Your loved one will more than likely look to you for strength in the lead up to and after the surgery. Make sure you prepare yourself mentally to be the one that he/she relies on for support and decision-making. Often it's the positive outlook of the patient that helps surgery and recovery go well, and a lot of that positivity can be drawn from the people around them – so be strong.

### **Speak to your family and friends about what you are doing.**

They might also offer caregiving support. Talking to them about what you are doing will also help you feel less stressed and make them more understanding of your commitments.

### **Make arrangements so that you can confidently care for your loved one.**

Patient confidentiality might hold you back from accessing the information you need to provide the care required for your loved one. Make arrangements with your loved one and the service providers he/she will access during recovery so that you can understand and help support the care plan set in place.



# Tips to make caregiving easier during your loved one's recovery

As a caregiver for someone who has undergone a hip or knee replacement, your role in his/her recovery is extremely important. Recovery from any surgery can be emotionally and physically taxing at times, however having you available to help will make recovery quicker and put your loved one's mind at ease.

However, that doesn't mean you should sacrifice your own wellbeing for someone else's. It's important to find a balance that works.

Here are a few tips to make your caregiving experience easier for you both:

- One of the best things you can do as a carer is to develop a routine. Knowing when to give medication to the patient, when follow up appointments will be and when prescriptions need to be filled ahead of time will make the process much smoother.
- Schedule appointments that work with both your own and your loved one's schedules.
- Be clear and specific in the way that you communicate with your loved one.
- Be a good listener.
- While your loved one has reduced mobility, leave plenty of time to get from A to B to reduce any travel-induced stress.
- Prepare any questions you have ahead of appointments with the surgeon and other services you access.
- Listen to the patient's needs; don't just guess.
- Rethink the personal boundaries you have with your loved one. Topics that were previously not spoken about, such as bodily functions, will become a daily concern. Your loved one may have difficulty fulfilling some of his/her own daily needs during recovery, so it's important to be open, honest and to have those conversations so you are better able to care for their needs.



# Caring for the carer – how to balance your wellbeing with caring

The demands of a caring role as well as the demands from your family, work and personal life can bring about a range of emotions and feelings. While caring for someone is rewarding, you might find yourself overwhelmed by the change that caring for someone brings to your life, develop guilt for wanting a break from being a carer or losing your temper at times, feel afraid about picking up your life after caregiving or even worried about what would happen if you didn't cope or became unwell.

These reactions to caring for someone else are completely normal.

There will be physical and emotional demands placed on you as the carer of someone who is recovering from a hip or knee replacement. So, one of the most important things you need to think about as a carer is **YOUR WELLBEING**.

Make sure you:

## Get some **YOU** time

Beyond caring for your family, working, housework and/or any other daily requirements, it's important to take time out for you. Setting time aside to do something relaxing or that makes you happy is important for your own wellbeing and will also strengthen your relationship and ability to care for someone else.



## Stay healthy

Keep your energy and endorphins high by making time for regular exercise (choose activities you love) and for preparing and enjoying healthy meals.

## Get eight hours of sleep every night

Try to stick to eight hours of sleep every night. Avoid any caffeinated drinks or food and technology before bed to help you ease into sleep.

## Set boundaries

While it is easy to forget your own needs and consider only those of the person you are caring for, it's important to set appropriate boundaries to give you time to spend with friends and family and on your own.

## Take breaks

Although it can be hard to do, it's important to take some time for yourself every day. It doesn't need to be long; just set aside 10-15 minutes to give you time to sit, relax, read a book, meditate or listen to your favourite music.



# Where to find help if you need it

If you do find yourself feeling overwhelmed and are having difficulty coping, don't be afraid to ask for help.

In some cases, seeking someone to talk to (such as a family member, friend or doctor) may help. In others, you might want to try one of the below options:

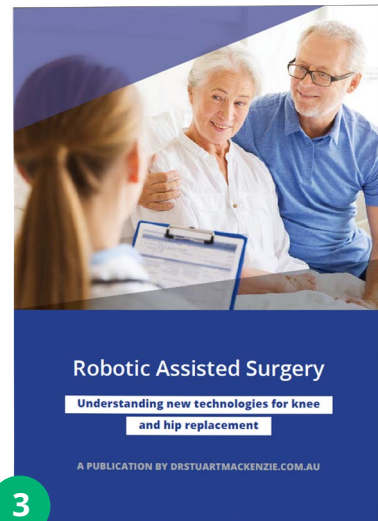
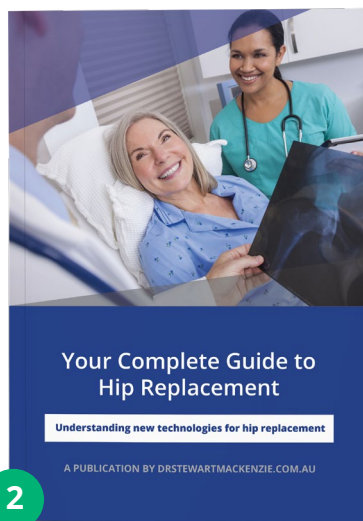
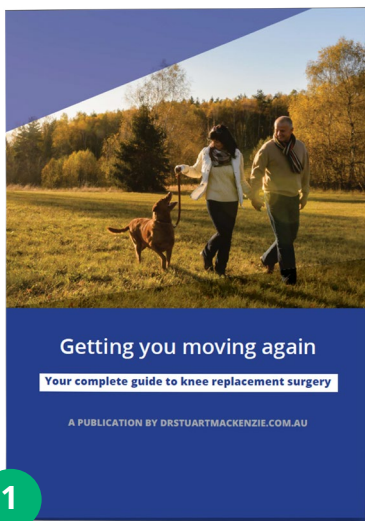
- Caring for a loved one can be isolating at times, but you are never alone. If you do need to speak to someone who understands, there are often caregiver support groups in your local region that you can access. Search for a carer support group by [clicking here \(https://www.carersnsw.org.au/groups\)](https://www.carersnsw.org.au/groups).
- With a digital world of information at your fingertips, there are many resources available to help support your caring role. For example, you will find some great resources on the [Carers NSW site \(https://www.carersnsw.org.au/groups\)](https://www.carersnsw.org.au/groups).
- Depending on your loved one's needs, you may be able to access financial assistance and have the right to request flexible working arrangements or carer's leave to assist your role. Call the Carer Line on **1800 242 636** to discuss your eligibility for financial and workplace assistance.
- Another great tool that will help you find an appropriate service to support your caregiving or your loved one's needs is the [Carer Gateway \(https://www.caregateway.gov.au/find-a-service\)](https://www.caregateway.gov.au/find-a-service).



# Resources for the patient

We've created a suite of information e-books that will help your loved one feel prepared for his/her upcoming knee or hip replacement.

1. "Getting you moving again - Your complete eguide to knee replacement surgery"
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## CALL DR. MACKENZIE TODAY

For a consultation or to discuss any of your concerns about your loved ones after surgery call **(02) 4963 3393**



Dr Stuart MacKenzie