

Reverse Shoulder Replacement Surgery

The problem:

Arthritis of the shoulder joint with a rotator cuff that is not repairable.

Reason for treatment:

Pain and loss of function.

The treatment:

Surgery is done with an open incision about 5-9 inches in length. The incision is on the front of the shoulder. Most muscles are separated, but one muscle, called the subscapularis, is cut to gain access to the shoulder joint. The surfaces of the ball (humeral head) and socket (glenoid) are cut away. The ball is replaced with a metal socket. The socket is replaced with a metal ball. After this is done, the subscapularis muscle may or may not be repaired, depending on the quality of the tissue.

Day of surgery:

The patient arrives 2 hours before the procedure to meet the operative team. A catheter is placed in their vein (IV) and the patient is given a nerve block. The nerve block helps with pain after the surgery for approximately 12 hours. The patient is still put to sleep during the surgery. The surgery itself takes up to two hours, but the setup time in the operating room and the takedown time adds one hour. The surgery is done with the patient in the sitting position, so care is taken to position the patient appropriately. The patient stays in the recovery room for 1-2 hours. Most patients stay in the hospital for one night for pain control after the surgery.

After surgery:

The patient wears a sling for 4 weeks. The patient keeps the incision dry for 7 days. Sponge baths are appropriate. The sling is removed only to take a bath or shower and when sitting standing while awake and away from crowds. It should always be worn when asleep. Exercises start 4 weeks after surgery. Recovery is usually complete at 4-6 months.

The shoulder is painful for several days and is uncomfortable for several weeks. Pain is managed with ice and narcotic pain medication. Narcotic pain medication is stopped by the sixth week after surgery. Anti-inflammatory medication may start at 4-6 weeks if needed.

The metal from the surgery may cause metal detectors to go off. This is not common and is usually not a problem in airports. Also, once a patient has had replacement surgery, they need antibiotics before any procedure is done on other parts of their body, including dental work. These antibiotics are necessary only for the first year after surgery. Please consult my office or your other doctors at the time of the procedure to have the antibiotics prescribed.