

## A Patient Education Guide: TOTAL ELBOW ARTHROPLASTY (TEA)

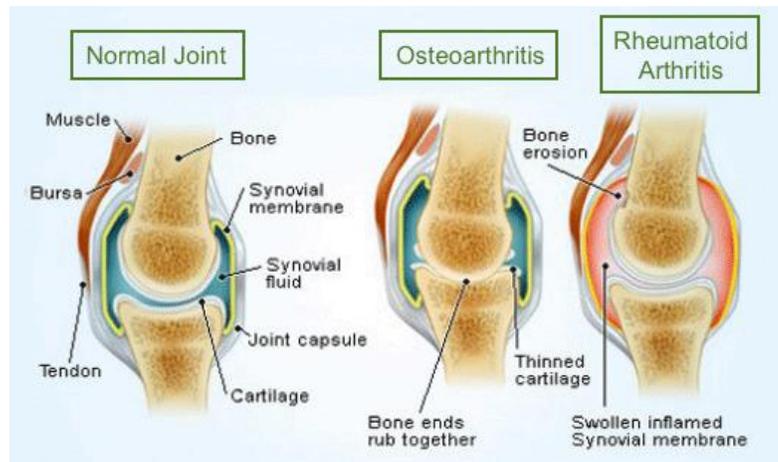
*This is a brief overview of what you, the patient, should know about getting a Total Elbow Arthroplasty (TEA). If you have any questions, please write them down and bring them to your next consultation so I can go through them with you in detail.*

### WHY DO I NEED A TOTAL ELBOW ARTHROPLASTY?

*Arthroplasty* is the medical term for the reconstruction or replacement of a joint. There are different types of elbow arthroplasty procedures. The underlying issue(s) and the extent of the damage to the elbow joint help determine if a Total Elbow Arthroplasty (TEA) is best suited for you and your goals.

#### Rheumatoid Arthritis

Arthritis, the progressive destruction of joint cartilage, is the most common reason why patients have an elbow replacement. *Rheumatoid* arthritis is caused by a medical condition where your immune system mistakenly attacks your own tissue, particularly the lining of the joints. This causes inflammation and erosion on the joint surface which results in pain, deformity, swelling, and can decrease your range of motion. A TEA replaces this diseased joint with metal and plastic to help regain mobility and reduce pain.



#### Osteoarthritis

Osteoarthritis can be thought of as “wear and tear” of the joint surface and cartilage. When the cartilage wears down, the space between joint components becomes smaller. Without the cartilage lining, bone on one side of the joint begins to rub on the other side of the joint. This can cause pain, deformity, swelling, and decrease your range of motion. Patients may also get a sensation of “loose pieces” or “crackling and popping” in the joint. Severe osteoarthritis is less common in the elbow than other joints, however, TEA is still a viable choice for older patients who have exhausted other treatment options.

#### Fracture

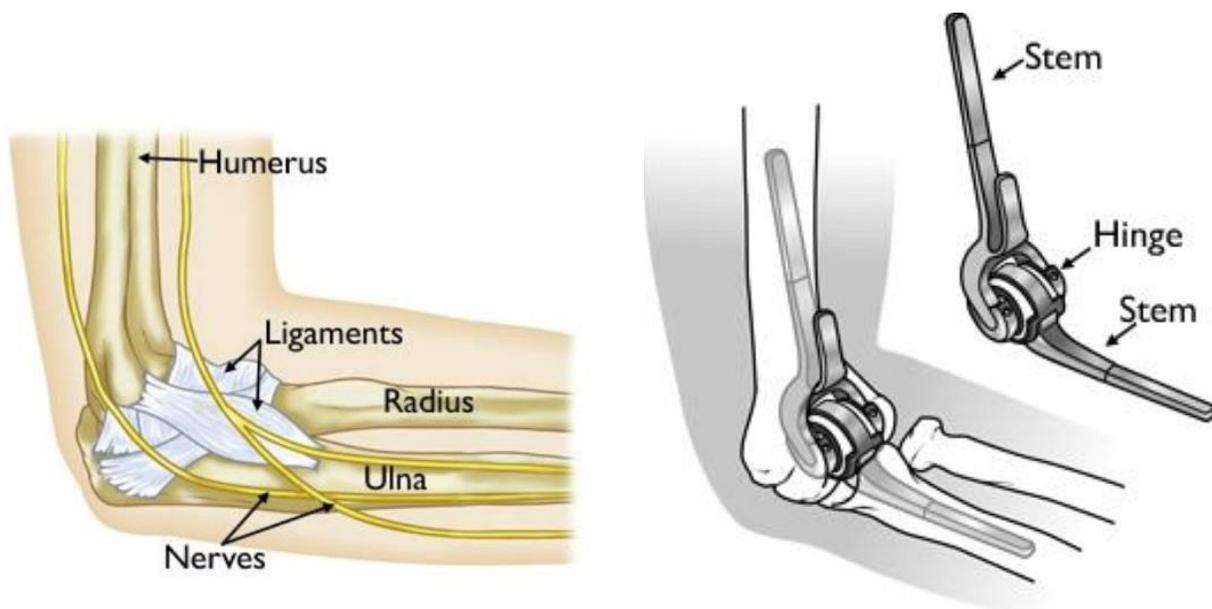
Elbow fractures can sometimes be fixed with plates and screws. However, if someone has a fracture that is beyond repair, is of advanced age, or has a medical condition that can severely affect bone healing, an elbow replacement is a good option. This will allow for better function and decrease the likelihood of needing multiple operations in the future. Multiple studies have suggested, that in an older population with severe fractures, patients with TEA's do better than with fixing the fracture with plates and screws.

## WHAT IS A TOTAL ELBOW ARTHROPLASTY?

Total Elbow Arthroplasties are designed to recreate the normal anatomy and position of your original joint with a combination of metal and highly durable plastic. Generally, the bony ends of the joint are replaced with metal and are separated by a plastic insert.

The metal ends are attached to “stems”, which are extensions of metal that insert into the arm bone (the humerus) and one of the forearm bones (the ulna) respectively. These stems are usually secured into the bone with bone cement. The plastic insert acts as a hinge between the two metal components. The humeral metal component has a “phalange” or metal extension on the front which increases stability and helps control rotation.

While TEAs can offer substantial benefits to patients, there are certain restrictions to be aware of. After a TEA, you cannot lift more than 5-8 lbs with that arm for the lifetime of the prosthesis. While this may initially sound very restrictive, the benefits of pain relief and increase in motion often outweigh the downside of this problem.



## WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT?

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### Before Surgery

- You may need medical clearance from your medical specialist (primary care doctor, cardiologist, etc.) before surgery.
- Our office will contact you to book your surgical time and location. Typically, outpatient (same day) surgeries are done at the Hoag Orthopedic Institute (HOI) Surgery Center in Newport Beach and in-patient (overnight) procedures are done at the HOI Hospital in Irvine.
- You will receive a confirmation call from the hospital a few days before surgery telling you at what time you should arrive. They will usually go over last-minute details such as hygiene tips, and let you know which medications to bring. It is normal to arrive several hours ahead of your scheduled time to allow for the check-in process.
- **Do not eat or drink anything after midnight the night before surgery.** You may take sips of water to swallow pills if required and cleared by your medical team. **Your surgery may need to be canceled if you do not adhere to these instructions.**

### Morning of Surgery

- Arrive at the hospital or surgery center at your instructed time.
- If possible, arrive with a family member or friend who can assist with your check-in and help you remember any last-minute questions. There will be a place for family and friends to wait while you are in surgery.
- Dr. Kassam will meet with you before you enter the operating room to answer any questions and perform an initial safety check.
- The anesthesia team will meet with you to discuss their anesthesia plan during surgery and be able to answer any questions you may have for them.

### After Surgery

#### *Hospital Stay*

- **Most patients having elbow replacements stay overnight and leave the next morning.**
- During this time, your nurse and anesthesia team will help to manage your post-operative pain. **It is important to know that you will have some pain, but the medications should help make your pain manageable.**
- You will also meet with our Occupational or Physical Therapist who will review exercises you can do after surgery. Your elbow will be in a plaster splint so these may be limited initially.
- **You will need someone to take you home.**
- A Care Coordinator can be available to help if you need any other services when you are discharged home.

#### *Home*

- **Wear your sling at all times except for bathing and doing your gentle post-operative exercises.** These exercises include moving your hand and wrist and coming out of the sling to fully straighten and bend your elbow. You should do this 3-4 times a day.
- You will typically have a waterproof bandage that allows you to shower normally. Confirm this with your nurse before you leave the hospital. Pat it dry after you shower.
- **Do not use your operative arm to carry or lift anything.** Do not use your operative arm to push yourself up from a chair or when getting off the toilet.
- **No driving while using your sling and while you are taking your narcotic pain medications.**
- Do your best to wean off your narcotic pain medications. Over-the-counter medications such as Tylenol and Ibuprofen can be very helpful.

- Many people are most comfortable sleeping in a more upright position after surgery. You can opt to sleep in a recliner or prop yourself up on pillows in bed. **You need to wear your sling while sleeping.**
- If you received an ice machine, please use it as instructed to help reduce swelling. You may also use ice packs or bags. Do not use for longer than directed and always avoid direct skin contact.
- Follow your in-hospital physical therapy instructions carefully if you have been given them.

#### *Follow-Up*

- Your first follow-up appointment is usually 7-10 days following surgery.
- At this visit we will discuss your progress and check your incision. We may take x-rays. We may also remove your sutures/staples at this time
- We will determine if you are ready for outpatient physical therapy.
- If you can start physical therapy, you will be given a referral with the specific instructions both you and your therapist should follow.

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*I hope this has helped clarify some of your questions surrounding a Total Elbow Arthroplasty (TEA). You can find additional resources including video demonstrations at [www.NewportShoulder.com](http://www.NewportShoulder.com).*

*As always, do not hesitate to ask questions and schedule a follow-up appointment should you require any further discussion.*

*Best,*



*Hafiz F. Kassam, MD*

