What to Consider When Evaluating a Joint Replacement Program

If you’ve been living with joint pain, you know how it can impact your everyday activities, hobbies, family and lifestyle in general. You may be thinking about joint replacement surgery to alleviate your pain and help you return to a more active life.

Choosing the right doctor and hospital can be difficult, and when it comes to surgery, you want to make sure you are making the best decision possible. There are some important questions to consider when selecting a joint replacement specialist or evaluating a joint replacement program. These considerations will help you make the right choice based on your specific needs.

**PHYSICIAN EDUCATION**

You’ll want to learn about the academic background of your physician. What is the doctor’s education and medical degree? Where did they do their training and/or fellowship? Are they board-certified? Do they participate in research? Orthopedic surgeons cover a wide range of conditions, so you may want to look for a surgeon who specializes in joint replacement surgery or at least has extensive experience with it.

**PHYSICIAN EXPERIENCE**

It’s important to know the surgeon’s level of experience and how long they have been practicing. Do they perform the specific type of joint replacement surgery you need (hip, knee, ankle, shoulder, etc…)? How many procedures has the surgeon performed? How many per year? The physician you choose should do the type of procedure you need as a routine. Any physician who performs at least 50 joint replacement surgeries a year usually has a good routine. The more procedures a surgeon does, the more the risk of complications decreases.

**SCOPE OF CARE**

Another thing to find out is whether the program you’re considering offers a full continuum of care, from surgery preparation to rehabilitation. Do they help prepare you for surgery? Do they provide physical therapy after surgery? Joint replacement typically requires physical therapy and post-op care, so make sure to ask about these services as well.

**INNOVATION**

Joint replacement, like all fields of medicine, has seen great advancements in recent years in both the types of materials being used and the ways in which surgeries are performed. Make sure your surgeon provides the latest technologies and techniques to assure your best treatment option.

**LOCATION**

Where is the doctor’s office located? What about the hospital? Look into where the doctor’s office is located as well as which hospital you would use and where you would need to go for any additional tests or follow-up visits after surgery. Depending on the joint you are having replaced, you may be in the hospital for a few days, so choose a facility you are comfortable with.

**PERSONAL REFERENCES**

Ask your family, friends or coworkers if they have any experience with joint replacement surgery. And if so, whether they can recommend a good orthopedic surgeon and/or program. Also ask your primary care physician. He/she should have at least one or two recommendations.

**CREDENTIALS**

Is the physician part of a nationally ranked orthopedic program or healthcare system? Joint replacement is a life-changing procedure, and knowing that you’re selecting the right physician and facility will bring you peace of mind that you’re making the right choice and will receive exceptional care.

Indiana University Health is Indiana’s only nationally ranked orthopedics program. For more information about our Joint Replacement services, go to [iuhealth.org/arnett/jointpain](http://iuhealth.org/arnett/jointpain) or to schedule an appointment with an IU Health Orthopedic Specialist, call 765.448.8100 or 800.542.7818. 2011 U.S. News & World Report rankings