



ORTHOPAEDIC
& SPINE CENTER
Open MRI Center



CHOOSING THE RIGHT ORTHOPEDIC SURGEON

Orthopedic surgery can offer a positive solution to ongoing pain or a debilitating musculoskeletal injury. If you have been advised that surgery is the best option to relieve your pain, we encourage you to do the proper research and ask the right questions to help you narrow your options to the orthopedic surgeon best-suited to your needs. Searching for an orthopedic surgeon for joint replacement or another procedure may make you feel overwhelmed. However, you don't need to blindly scroll through surgeons on the internet or pick randomly from a list. **This guide will help you find the best provider for your individual situation so you can approach your procedure feeling confident and comfortable.**



Choosing an Orthopedic Surgeon

Choosing an orthopedic surgeon can be daunting if you don't know where to begin. Here are some suggestions to get you started:

Gather Recommendations



You can get recommendations from many sources. Ask as many people as you can for their opinions. You may find that one or two names pop up consistently, adding further credence to their talents as surgeons. Some good sources for recommendations include:

- Your primary care physician/provider
- Personal friends
- Family members
- Social media connections
- Online patient reviews
- OR and hospital nurses
- Clinical staff members
- Check physician websites for testimonials from satisfied patients

Compare Credentials



While there are many skills associated with orthopedic surgery that you can't measure, education is something that you can quantify and compare. It's usually very easy to find out about a doctor's educational background. A quick Internet search should tell you about a practitioner's specialty, education, certifications and awards, and other medical credentials. Surgeons who are active in medical associations and other groups are an excellent choice because you know that they devote time outside the practice to their career as well.

Orthopedic surgery is continuously developing and changing due to technological advances. Look for a physician with both a degree from a well-respected school as well as real-world experience. You'll want a surgeon who is both educated and well-practiced in the field. Most surgeons will have extensive training at multiple schools. **Surgeons must obtain a bachelor's degree and medical degree followed by an internship, residency, and some will even pursue a fellowship.** Orthopedic surgeons may belong to groups such as the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, American College of Osteopathic Surgeons, American Osteopathic Association, American Osteopathic Academy of Orthopedics, AO North America, and state osteopathic associations, orthopedic societies, and medical societies.

Consider the Surgeon's Specialty, a Fellowship, or Commensurate experience



Orthopedics is a specialty in itself, but you'll also find that orthopedic surgeons are further specialized. Some common subspecialties in the field include:

- Joint replacement
- Joint revision
- Spine
- Sports medicine
- Shoulder
- Hand
- Foot & Ankle
- Pediatric orthopedics

An orthopedic surgeon who specializes in your area of need offers additional experience and expertise related to your specific issue. While not all orthopedic issues apply to a subspecialty or require a surgeon who has one, more complex problems can benefit greatly from this type of care.

Some surgeons decide to pursue a fellowship as a continuation of their academic requirements. Most fellowship programs last at least a year, whereas in the past, some may have been as short as six months. Fellowships generally allow physicians to further research and develop their area of focus within orthopedics through intensive, hands-on experience in actual patient care, diagnosis, treatment and surgery. Since orthopedics is such a diverse area of study, participating in a fellowship allows surgeons to gain more knowledge and insight into one specific area and provide better care in their area of study.

Check Your Insurance Coverage



An important step when you're looking for a new doctor is to check your insurance coverage. Some plans require a referral from your primary care physician if you want to see a specialist. Nearly all plans have specific providers and hospitals that they will cover. While some insurance plans offer partial coverage for out-of-network doctors, it's almost always most cost-effective to select a provider that participates in your insurance network.

Your First Visit: What to Ask

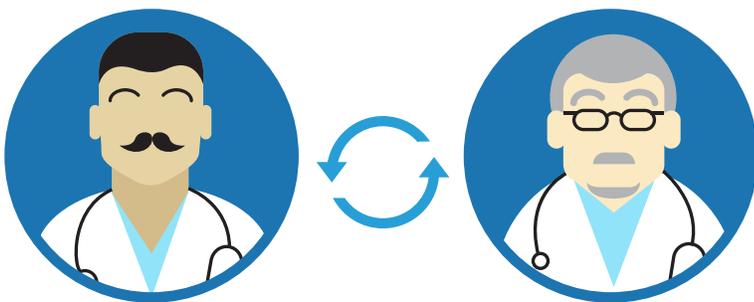


Even the most comprehensive research will leave you with some lingering questions about your procedure and your surgeon. Most surgeons are happy to schedule a consultation so you can get all your questions answered before choosing the one to perform your surgery. It's helpful to make a list of questions before your consultation. Leave space beside and beneath your questions so you can take notes while you're speaking with the surgeon. This will make it easier to compare different doctors later.

Some questions that you may want to ask include:

- ➔ What procedure(s) would you recommend for my problem?
- ➔ How often have you performed these procedures?
- ➔ What complications may arise due to this procedure?
- ➔ What is your complication rate with this procedure?
- ➔ What is your complication rate overall?
- ➔ Are there other less-invasive options available to me?
- ➔ What are your protocols for preventing infection? DVTs (blood clots)?
- ➔ What is the recovery period from this surgery?
- ➔ What should I expect during recovery?
- ➔ When can I return to work? Driving? Regular activities?
- ➔ How can I contact you if I have a problem after surgery?
- ➔ How do you handle my post-surgical pain?
- ➔ How do you follow up with patients post-surgery?
- ➔ Who else will I work with on the medical team? What physical therapists, nurses, and other specialists are available to follow up with my care and recovery?
- ➔ Do you participate in any clinical trials or offer new techniques?
- ➔ Are you fellowship-trained?
- ➔ Are you board certified?
- ➔ May I get another opinion?

Your surgeon should always make you feel comfortable about seeking a second opinion. If you encounter a doctor who discourages you from getting a second opinion, this is a red flag and an indication that you should definitely go elsewhere.



Signs You May Want to Change Surgeons

No matter where you are in the process of scheduling your surgery, it's never too late to change surgeons if you're uncomfortable with your choice for any reason. Take a proactive stance in your health care, and research your condition and possible treatments on your own. If you're

interested in a particular procedure, your surgeon should be open to discussing it with you. He or she should also be able to explain clearly why a desired procedure won't work for you if you've found a solution in which you are interested.

Some signs that it's time for you to look into other surgeons include:

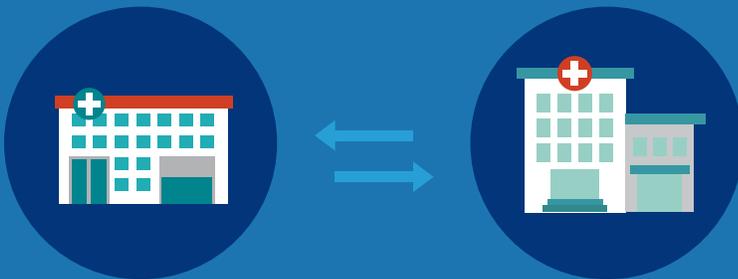


- Your surgeon refuses to discuss other options with you, even though you're feeling unsure about your current plan.
- You feel uncomfortable asking questions.
- Your surgeon pushes you to have the surgery without a compelling health-related reason.

- You ask questions and your surgeon ignores those questions.
- You don't understand your surgeon's explanations. He or she doesn't speak with you on your own level.
- Your gut feeling is telling you to go to someone else.

It's fine for you to follow your instincts when it comes to picking a surgeon. Credentials and experience are important, but it's also essential that you feel comfortable with your doctor.

Remember, you are ultimately responsible for your medical care and have the power to take it in a different direction. By researching your provider carefully, you can approach your surgery with confidence, knowing that your surgeon is the most-qualified clinician for the job.



Comparing Hospitals

Your orthopedic surgery options available vary by geographic location. Some cities have hospitals dedicated only to orthopedics, while others have surgery centers within a traditional hospital that see a large number of orthopedic patients. Below are a few questions to ask during your research phase:

- How many orthopaedic cases are performed per year at this facility? This will help you grasp an understanding of how well-versed hospital clinical staff is at caring for patients having your procedure.
- What types of cases are seen?
- What investments has the hospital made in technology to assist Orthopedic surgeons?
 - Robotic-Assistance such as RoboDoc, Makoplasty?

- Computer-Navigation for surgery?
- Hanna Tables for hip replacements?
- Specialized instrumentation for complex reconstructions?

There are a few factors to which you should pay particular attention when considering hospitals:

- Infection rate
- Re-admissions rate
- Outcomes data
- Patient experience (such as anecdotal and online reviews)

Hospital Infection Rates



Many factors can contribute to a hospital's infection rates, including the type of anesthesia used, whether antibiotics are administered before surgery, and the time spent in surgery. Hospitals can further reduce infection rates by focusing on proper sterilization procedures for the equipment, the room, and the medical staff. Prior to the surgery, some hospitals may require the patient to partake in some pre-surgical infection control protocols this can reduce the risk of infection.

If an infection does occur, Medicare/Medicaid requires that the surgical site involving infection is reported. [These hospital-acquired conditions \(HACS\)](#) are mandatory for all claims involve inpatient and outpatient procedures. It may not be something that you should worry about after researching your facility and surgeon properly, but it is always smart to be prepared.

Outcomes Data



Hospital outcomes data are an excellent way of judging the proficiency of the location in question. [Hospital Compare](#), a search tool provided by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, provides detailed data on hospitals around the U.S. This is a useful resource because it allows you to compare hospitals

using the same measurements and methods. Higher success rates are always preferable. Whenever possible, focus your research on the orthopedic department so that your information isn't skewed by the inclusion of unrelated data on other types of procedures.

Patient Experience



The Internet offers a wealth of resources for comparing patient experiences across different hospitals.

HealthGrades.org provides hospital ratings. This site also gives out awards for high performance. The Joint Commission operates QualityCheck.org, where you can see certifications, accreditations, and awards.

There are many review sites online that you can peruse as well for an idea of how actual patients felt about their personal experiences. **Keep in mind, however, that most patients will only take the time to share their experiences if they were extremely good or extremely bad.** Those who have a moderate experience that meets their expectations don't seek out review sites to share their stories as often.

When choosing the right orthopedic surgeon for your procedure, finalize your due diligence, meet with the physician, preview the location, and get referrals. At that point, it's up to your good judgment to choose the right location for you. **At OSC, we focus on creating the best experience for our patients, and our team of highly-qualified physicians and therapists has the same goal as you, making you better.** We work together to ensure that your problem is solved, the pain is gone, and that you can continue with your routine. If you have any hesitations or questions, just ask us!

About Orthopaedic & Spine Center

Orthopaedic & Spine Center, located in Newport News, Virginia, is a full-service orthopaedic practice with 32 patient exam rooms, three x-ray suites, a Lunar DPX Bone Densitometer Room, the Peninsula's most powerful Open Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) Center and a state-of-the-art Interventional Pain Management Center and Physical Therapy Center. OSC physicians have full staff privileges at Mary Immaculate Hospital and Riverside Regional Medical Center and active clinical staff privileges at Peninsula Surgery Center. Between 8% and 12% of Orthopaedic & Spine Center patients have surgery, while the rest are treated with conservative approaches. To learn more, visit www.osc-ortho.com.



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