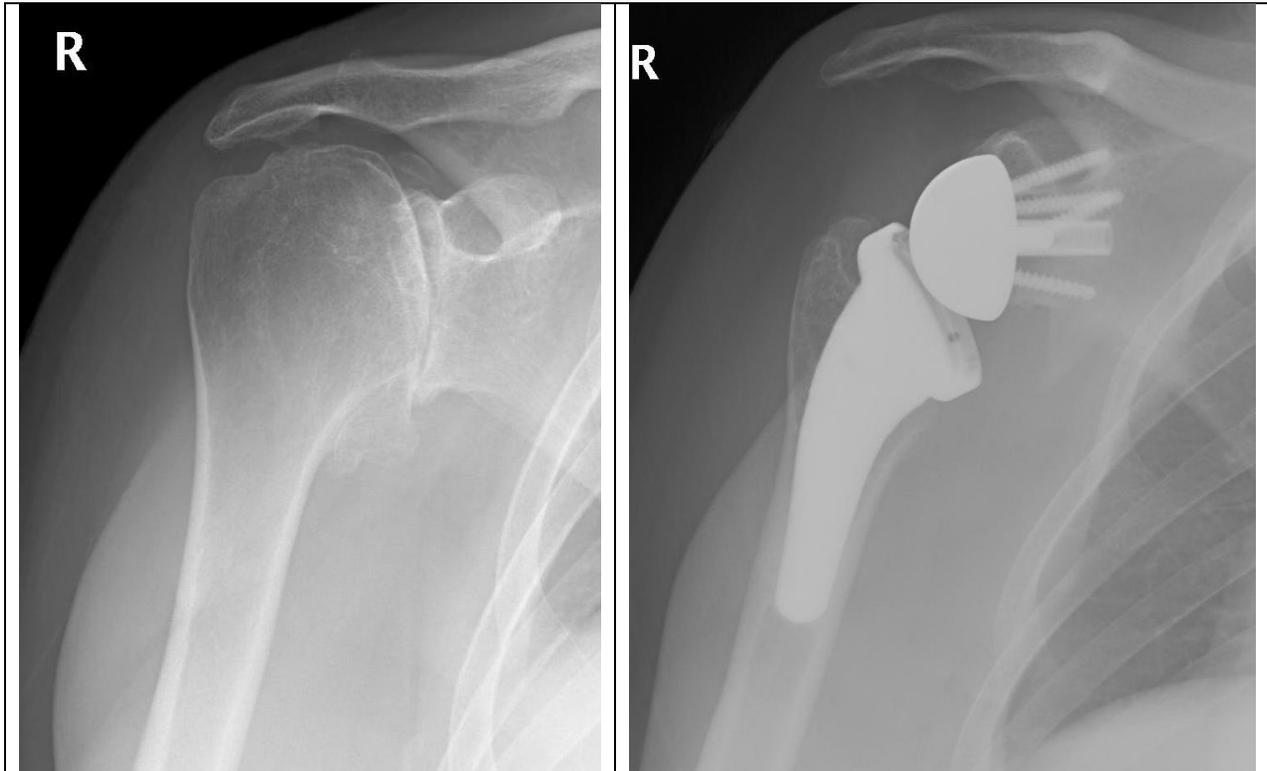


Your diagnosis is **shoulder rotator cuff tear/deficiency with or without glenohumeral arthritis.**



X-ray showing an arthritic shoulder joint with evidence of a rotator cuff tear

X-ray of the patient after a reverse shoulder arthroplasty

How does reverse shoulder replacement surgery help?

The shoulder is a “ball-and-socket” joint. The ball is the head of the humerus and the socket is the glenoid (on the scapula or ‘shoulder blade’). When a person has a massive rotator cuff tear the ball of the joint tends to move up almost touching the bone above it (as in the x-ray shown above). This can make moving the arm painful and difficult. If the tear is too large to be repaired a reverse shoulder replacement is a good option. Some people have severe arthritis in addition to a massive rotator cuff tear, and a reverse shoulder replacement is a good option for this situation as well.

A reverse shoulder replacement “reverses” the shoulder anatomy, putting the round “head” on the “socket” side and the socket on the head side. By changing the anatomy of the shoulder the deltoid muscle of the shoulder is able to function like the rotator cuff, which allows a person to lift their arm through a full range of motion. In addition, if someone has arthritis as well as a severe rotator cuff tear, removing the arthritic surfaces and replacing with the implant removes the source of arthritic pain.

Reverse shoulder replacement implants



Frequently Asked Questions

How long is the hospital stay after a shoulder replacement?

Most people are in the hospital for 1 to 3 days following shoulder replacement. It is important that pain is well managed prior to leaving the hospital. Having help at home after a shoulder replacement surgery is highly recommended because of the need to have assistance with driving and range of motion activities.

What type of anesthesia is used for a shoulder replacement surgery?

An interscalene brachial plexus nerve block along with general anesthesia are typically the types of anesthesia utilized for a shoulder replacement surgery. Prior to surgery the anesthesiologist prior to your surgery and can discuss the options for anesthesia at that time.

A nerve block numbs the arm during and for a number of hours after surgery. When the block wears off a person's pain will start to increase so speaking with the nurse about managing the surgical pain as the block wears off is very important. The nurses help determine the timing of pain medication in order to make this transition as comfortable as possible.

How is the surgical pain managed?

Pain after a surgical procedure is unavoidable but by appropriately using pain medications as well as using ice helps to make the pain more manageable. In the hospital the nurses help patients determine how to manage the pain associated with surgery including figuring out what pain medication works best for individual patients.

How long do I need to wear the sling?

The sling is meant to protect, not strictly "immobilize" the arm. The sling should be worn for approximately 6 weeks after surgery; it is especially important to sleep in the sling and use it when out in a public place the first 6 weeks after surgery. Unless instructed otherwise, the sling should be removed about 3 times a day to in order to bend and straighten the elbow to work out any stiffness. Doing gentle hand exercises such as lightly squeezing a ball will help minimize swelling that can occur in the hand and fingers.

What are common problems experienced immediately after surgery?

Most people do experience some difficulty sleeping after shoulder surgery. Sleeping in a recliner or propped up on pillows helps in getting more comfortable. Sleeping on the side opposite the shoulder surgery just after a shoulder replacement won't do any damage but most people find it is too uncomfortable. The difficulty sleeping does resolve and most people are able to sleep on the side that was operated on over time.

Is physical or occupational therapy necessary after shoulder replacement?

The day after surgery a hospital physical or occupational therapist provides instruction in the passive motion exercises allowed after surgery. Ideally they provide this instruction to the patient as well as a family member or friend because passive motion requires someone to move the patient's arm through a limited range of motion. Prescriptions for outpatient physical therapy are provided at the post-operative visits to the surgeon's clinic. The prescriptions describe the appropriate activities at the specific post-operative time. Seeing a PT or OT is important so the progression of activity is done in a safe manner, leading to the best possible result of surgery.

When is driving allowed?

We recommend no driving for the first 6 weeks after surgery or the sling is still being worn. In addition, if a patient is still taking narcotic pain medication he/she should not drive.

When can I go back to my regular physical activity?

The answer to this question varies for every individual depending on the activity. Cardiovascular exercise is important and encouraged after surgery; walking or riding a stationary bike without putting pressure on the operated arm are good activities to begin after surgery. Range of motion is limited for a number of weeks after surgery and only very light (2 lbs.) of strengthening is allowed until about 6 months post-op so returning to regular physical exercise may take 6 months to a year.

When can I go back to work?

If work is more sedentary such as computer based work, returning in 2 – 4 weeks may be reasonable. For more physically demanding jobs it is important to discuss job requirements with the surgeon and his team to fully understand how the surgery may impact returning to work.

Web links and contact info:

Western Orthopaedics: www.western-ortho.com 303-321-1333

Medication refill line: 303-253-7313 or toll free 1-888-900-1333

- Narcotic medications will not be refilled on the weekends, please arrange for your refills during normal business hours. Mon-Fri 8:30 a.m.– 5:00 p.m.

Denver Shoulder: www.denvershoulder.com

Rose Medical Center: www.rosemed.org