

INSTITUTE OF BONE AND JOINT HEALTH: DELIVERING EXCELLENT QUALITY AND SAFETY IN ORTHOPAEDIC CARE



Anthony Unger, M.D., medical director for the Sibley Institute for Bone and Joint Health and an orthopaedic surgeon at Sibley Memorial Hospital

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Sibley is known for providing high-quality, safe care for all patients. Our dedicated orthopaedic team is no exception, collaborating seamlessly with a focus on delivering results.

“Sibley’s team of experts is committed to using advanced, evidenced-based methods to ensure safe surgeries,” says Anthony Unger, M.D., medical director of Sibley’s Institute for Bone and Joint Health. “Coupled with a robust patient education program and our focus on delivering state-of-the-art care, our approach means that patients recover quickly with few or no complications.”

Reducing, and even preventing, the risk of infection and hospital readmission is a core focus for the orthopaedic team. When individuals choose orthopaedic surgery, their health care provider conducts a careful assessment of potential risk factors, including overall health status, body mass index and current medications. The care team then develops a comprehensive approach to minimize risk factors and reduce the risk of infection.

The team at Sibley also uses the Enhanced Recovery After Surgery (ERAS) protocol to prepare patients for procedures, reduce the risk of complications and promote faster recovery. A key element of ERAS is the reduction, or even elimination, of the use of narcotic pain medications. Because narcotic pain medications can result in significant grogginess, their use can prevent patients from being active shortly after surgery, and thereby increase total recovery time. At Sibley, 75 percent of all joint replacement patients are able to resume walking and begin working with a physical therapist the same day as surgery.



“Resuming activity as soon as possible after surgery is critical to achieving a shorter recovery time,” says Dr. Unger. “Using ERAS, along with the improved surgical techniques and anesthesiology that we employ at Sibley, patients are able to begin walking within a few hours after joint replacement. With advances in medicine, we now have vastly improved pain management options that give patients the ability to resume physical activity sooner, while remaining comfortable.”

A comprehensive patient education program rounds out the care team’s safety efforts and helps patients to feel confident and in control of their care. “Patients who undergo joint replacement surgery at Sibley have access to a nurse coordinator and nurse navigator who answer their questions and walk them through what to expect, both before and

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after surgery,” notes Dr. Unger. “The more education we can provide for patients throughout the surgery process, the better they tend to do as they recover.”

Continued on page 12 »

Story continued »

Suzanne Honchalk, R.N., is a Sibley nurse navigator who works with total hip and knee replacement patients at Sibley. “My job is to make sure that patients feel ready before surgery,” Honchalk says. “Patients are eager to get back to doing what they love. Providing them with information about how to care for themselves at home and the importance of physical therapy helps them achieve that goal,” she says.

“No matter what procedure we’re doing here at Sibley, the expertise of our staff is unparalleled, certainly in the Washington, D.C. region, and even in the country. Our goal is to provide our patients with peace of mind, knowing that their care team is focused on the details that make for a safe surgery and a fast recovery,” says Dr. Unger.