

Study shows athletes and weekend warriors can keep playing after shoulder joint replacement

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Replacing a joint in any part of the body often leads to a long recovery process and the possibility of not being able to return to a sport or activity. However, a new study presented at the American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine's (AOSSM) Annual Meeting in Keystone, Colorado, (July 9-12) presents findings that even an older individual who receives a total shoulder joint replacement can return to full participation within approximately six months of surgery.

"In our study, approximately 94 percent of the patients who have a total shoulder arthroplasty or [joint replacement](#), were able to return to sports and 85 percent were able to return to the type-specific sport they were involved in before the surgery," said lead author, Gregory N. Drake, DO, shoulder and elbow fellow, Fondren Orthopaedic Group, Texas Orthopaedics Hospital.

The study analyzed a database of all unconstrained total shoulder arthroplasties performed between July 1, 2004 and September 30, 2007 by a single surgeon. A questionnaire was sent to 304 patients with 165 responding. Eighty-seven of the respondents regularly participated in sports prior to surgery. The average age of the patients was 68.5 with an age range from 47-93. Patients were followed for a minimum of one year.

Researchers noted that activity modification until the six month point in

the rehabilitation protected the shoulder against any consequence of sport, such as a deceleration injury when a [golf](#) club hits the ground or a fall during a [tennis](#) match . Contact sports after joint replacement surgeries are generally discouraged for the rest of an individual's life, no matter their age.

"Eighty-eight percent of the individuals in our study returned to their activity levels for periods greater than 30 minutes per session with the same type of intensity. It also appears that the most likely reason for returning to the same level of participation is dependent on the motivation of the individual. Athletics can be a great motivator for surgery and an even greater one for patients to stick to a rehabilitation schedule," said Drake.

Source: American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine

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