

According to Consumer Reports, knee and hip replacements are now the third and fourth most common surgeries in U.S. hospitals, behind cesarean sections and circumcisions.

Although these procedures are becoming even more prevalent as the Baby Boomer generation ages, some patients looking for elective joint replacement surgery could face extra risks, due to their weight.

Studies show that a patient with a body mass index, or BMI, of 40 or greater is more likely to experience serious complications both during and after surgery than a patient of normal weight.

“The process of even going through surgery in and of itself can be taxing on a body,” said Erin Rogers, Orthopedic Service Line Leader, OSF Healthcare St. Joseph Medical Center. “There’s anesthesia, there’s the recovery following, and not only physically, but it can be emotionally taxing too, and it’s important to go into that feeling good – as good as you can – and to set yourself up for success.”

To help patients avoid unnecessary complications, OSF HealthCare St. Joseph Medical Center in Bloomington has developed a policy restricting elective joint replacement surgery for those with a BMI of 40 or greater.

However, these patients aren’t simply turned away and told to lose weight. The team at OSF St. Joseph has developed a one-of-a-kind program called Healthy Joints that will help guide the patient on a weight loss journey over the course of 20 weeks.

“The healthy joints program was developed because of a real need in the community. We felt like we needed to have a program that was all inclusive with regards to multi-factorial modalities to help people lose weight. That just simply doesn’t exist today,” said Dr. Joseph Newcomer, Orthopedic Surgeon, OSF HealthCare St. Joseph Medical Center.

Healthy Joints surrounds the patient with a team of experts and helps change habits and using four principles of success: embracing movement, eating with a purpose, redefining perceptions and engaging the family.

“We’re excited to bring four different entities within OSF together to create this program,” added Rogers. “It’s something that we haven’t done before, but it really makes sense, because OSF HealthCare has all of those resources that we can bring to bear to help support people in their weight loss journey.”

A Healthy Joints participant can expect help from a physical therapist and exercise physiologist, weight loss experts with the [HMR Weight Management](#) program and support from behavioral health pros.

“Weight loss is a behavioral modification. It’s not just a quick fix. This is a game changer. We teach them strategies and behaviors that they can use for the rest of their life to maintain a happy and healthy life,” explained Marie Jennings, Site Manager, OSF HealthCare St. Joseph Weight Management Center.

For many people attempting to lose weight, learning to enjoy activity can be a major stumbling block to success. Healthy Joints features a first-of-its-kind metabolic testing that determines an individual’s unique metabolic fingerprint at the cellular level.

It allows the Healthy Joints team to prescribe the best exercise protocol for an individual based on his or her test. It's called the METHOD test, and OSF St. Joseph is the first in the area to offer it. Dr. Newcomer says METHOD is a game changer.

"Having this a part of the program offers a very safe way in which people can exercise for a period of time," he said. "We know that if they keep their heart rate in the specific zone they are burning nothing but fat, and the other advantage of that is, if they are in their aerobic zone, they're not producing lactaid, which causes muscle fatigue and soreness. So clients can exercise for 45 minutes, they can sweat because they're producing energy and burning fat, and they'll wake up the next day feeling great."

One of the biggest aspects of the Health Joints Program includes family support. According to Erin Kennedy, Manager of the Center for Healthy Lifestyles at OSF St. Joseph, on top of the guidance from the team of OSF HealthCare experts, getting support at home can be a key factor in weight loss success.

"Weight loss is difficult," said Kennedy. "One of the great things this program provides is the encouragement of family support. We know that whether it's family or friends to support the journey of weight loss, there are going to be better outcomes."

Joint pain can be difficult to live with day in and day out, but there is help available. A multi-disciplinary team at OSF HealthCare St. Joseph Medical Center is assembled and ready to help those suffering from joint pain get on a path to health optimization.

"Optimization is really just the process of making something as effective and functional as possible. When we apply this to joints and to our health, it simply means we are doing everything that we can to improve our health status," explained Rogers.

The 20 week Healthy Joints program is available to prospective joint replacement patients with a BMI of 40 or greater. To learn more about the Health Joints Program at OSF HealthCare St. Joseph Medical center, click [here](#) or call (309) 661-5151.