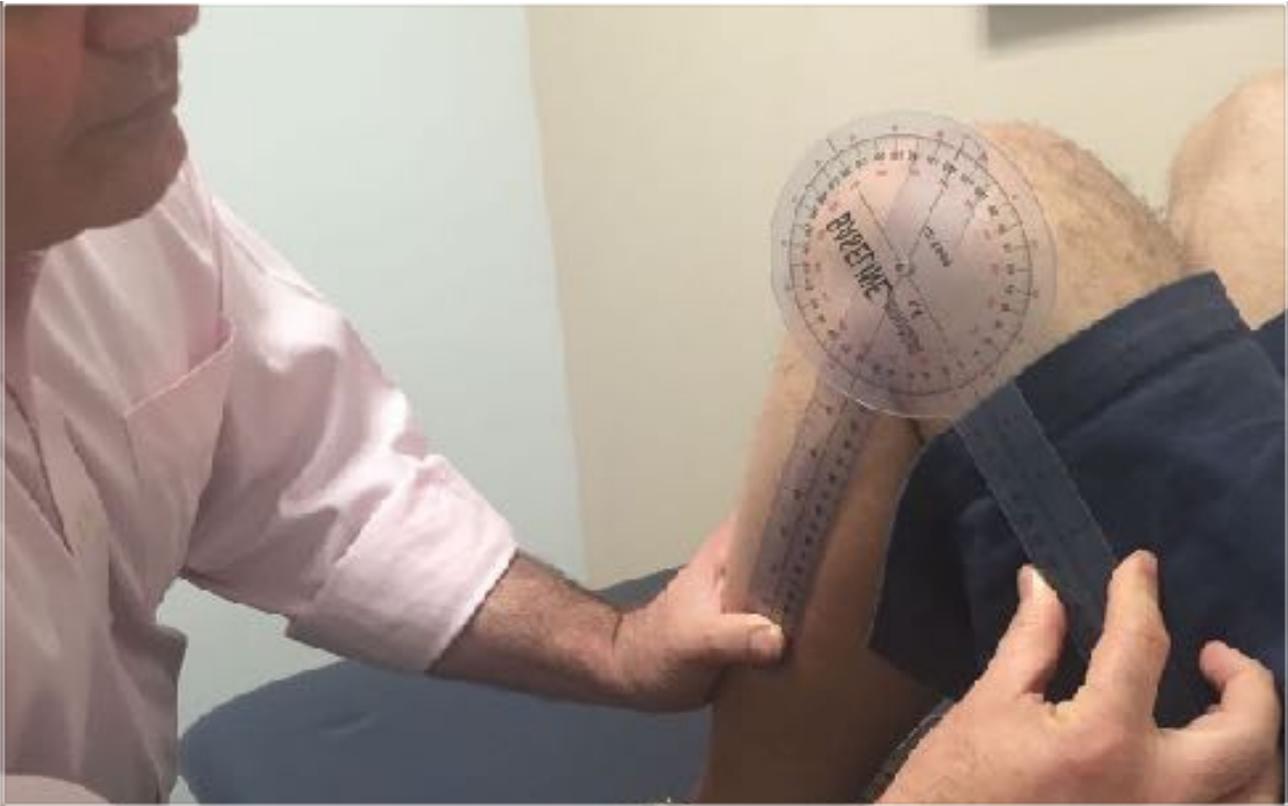


Pre-Hab

How Getting In Shape Before Surgery Can Speed Your Recovery



At Performance Physical Therapy, we have a simple goal- to treat every patient as a member of our family, devoting personal attention and care to their well being and recovery. This book on Pre-hab is the first in a series to help you understand our philosophy and commitment to your well being and rapid recovery.

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What is Prehab? When is it necessary?

Imagine you have just left the orthopedic surgeon's office. You have a firm date for your hip or knee replacement in about 2 months. Or maybe you are considering back surgery to relieve the pain from a slipped disk or spinal stenosis. Already, you have butterflies in your stomach about the procedure, what it will be like, and how you will expect to feel after the surgery.

Wouldn't it be nice to have your questions answered completely? And wouldn't it also be great if there was something you could do **now**, before your surgery, that would make your time after the procedure more comfortable and help you recover quicker?

This is where "Pre-Hab" comes in!

Pre-Hab is a way to gain strength and fitness before your surgery or procedure- It involves having physical therapy **beforehand**, rather than just afterwards. The focus in Pre-hab is largely on conditioning and building up your body, especially the area that will be involved in the surgery. For example, if you are about to have knee surgery. making sure you have strength in your leg muscles and flexibility in your tendons will make recovery after the surgery much faster, and likely to be much more comfortable when you start to move around.

This is critical, because following the procedure, you will likely lose range of motion and strength in the time you are recovering and not are not as physically active as normal. In fact, in most cases, an individual often is on a path of impaired ability, strength and function, well before they end up deciding to have surgery.

For example, if you have had arthritis in your knee, it's likely that you may have developed some limping or guarding of that knee when you walk. You may not bend it as much, or spend as much time on it when you stand. Over time, this will lead to gradual



weakening and stiffening of that body part. Then, if you decide to have surgery, you will likely be **even less** active during your recovery, leading to an even greater decline in your strength and flexibility.

Don't Let This Happen to You

Family Story

Janet is in her early 70's and needed to have back surgery for spinal stenosis. She had greatly reduced her mobility due to the pain in her back, and she was eager to get the surgery to get relief from the near constant discomfort. One of the key things she needed to do before being released from the hospital was to be able to get out of bed on her own, use a walker or cane, and manage a few steps, so she would be safe when returning home. Her length of stay in the hospital ended up being a few days longer than necessary because she simply did not have the arm strength necessary to reposition herself easily in bed or help get herself up to use the walker. In fact, the surgeon suggested she consider an extended stay in a rehab facility to help gain the strength she needed before they felt comfortable allowing her to go home with her family. Her lack of strength in her arms, surprisingly, effected whether or not she could get moving and back to the activities she loved after surgery more than just her back. She would have been a perfect candidate for prehab.

Pre-Hab Can Get You Home Faster

Janet's case isn't unusual. Most of us have heard the expression "use it or lose it". As corny as that sounds, it's absolutely true. All of the muscles that have been under-used or not used at all for an extended period of time prior to your surgery will be very weak afterwards. These are the exact muscles that you will ultimately be asking to work very hard again. How will you be able to do that if you haven't been using them in a long time? You may also need to call on other muscles, like using your arms to help you get moving with crutches or a walker, and if those are weak, getting moving will be delayed, which will also delay your recovery and returning to your normal activities! That's just frustrating, especially when the goal of the surgery is to make you feel better in the long run.



Before Surgery is Key

I see countless patients in my practice following major orthopedic surgeries such as hip and knee replacements. In many cases, these patients are doing great in their post operative recovery. What often holds them back from making rapid progress is how much weakness or tightness developed in the affected area **before** surgery.

For example, if you have been limping for years due to hip or knee pain, it is highly likely that you have inadvertently shut down certain muscles. You may be using other parts of your body to compensate for the pain as well, throwing off your balance. This was not a conscious decision on your part! It's simply your body's way of keeping you going in light of pain or impairment from a hip or knee that is not working properly. Many people even develop back pain as a result of trying to compensate for a painful hip or knee joint over time. You may end up developing an abnormal movement pattern. Think of it this way....Let's say you play golf. Over the years, your swing begins to change because you do not regularly see a professional who coaches you and gives feedback about what movements you are making in the swing that could cause a slice or hook. You just keep practicing the same "wrong" swing over and over.



Correct “Bad” Habits in Advance

That's **exactly** what happens with walking or general movement. You start to develop habits that help you avoid pain, even though these habits may be incorrect and throw off your posture or walking gait. The wrong movement pattern becomes the new normal for you. How will you ever break this habit? Let's go back to the golfing example. If you break down and go see a professional who videotapes you and analyzes the swing, they can show you where you are moving incorrectly. Once you see this, you can understand why you slice or hook the ball. With additional practice and coaching, you can learn new and more productive habits that will make a huge improvement in your game!

The same principle would apply in physical therapy pre-hab. The physical therapist will analyze your movements and walking technique to identify abnormalities that would need to be corrected. The best time to do this is ***before*** surgery. At this point, you are not distracted with the post operative symptoms and pain and can fully focus on the analysis of your problem. You can begin immediately to practice techniques to correct the problems. This will greatly accelerate your post-operative recovery and rehabilitation.

Looking at the Big Picture

It's important in Pre-hab to take a look at your overall fitness as well as the body part most affected. We want to make sure you are ready for surgery, and everything that will matter afterwards.



Our Therapists go the extra mile for our patients every day

Using the golf analogy again, your pro might take you out for a game and notice that the way you carry your bag is actually causing you to hunch a shoulder, which then ends up affecting your swing. Altering the way you carry your bag might make a huge improvement in your game even faster than just concentrating on your swing- because your hunched back is part of the big picture issue.

In Pre-hab, we also need to look at the wider picture of your health and fitness prior to surgery. A Pre-hab program might include exercise and procedures to increase your cardiovascular endurance which will speed your recovery and enable you to have better capacity for the necessary exercise after surgery. You might need to work on arm strength to make sure you can use crutches or a walker like a pro, which will speed your recovery and post-surgical discomfort tremendously. We often tease people that they will end up in the best shape of their lives after pre-hab!

Consider Pre-Hab as Part of Your Surgical Plan

Be sure to ask your surgeon to send you for "pre-hab" prior to your procedure. More and more insurance plans are covering pre-hab because they understand how much money it can save you- and them- during your recovery period, so talk to your Doctor about making this a key part of your pre-surgical planning. It will be the best decision you will have made and pave the way to a rapid and successful full recovery!