

Joint Arthroplasty or Arthrodesis Information Sheet

General indications for the procedure:

The indications for the procedure are to treat painful arthritis or instability of a joint or multiple joints within the hand, wrist or elbow.

Description of Procedure:

The arthritic bones will be approached through an open incision, and the arthritic surfaces will have all cartilage removed, or the entire arthritic bone will be removed. For arthrodesis, the bones will then be positioned directly against each other in an anatomically functional position, and will then be held in that position by either wires, pins, screws, or plates which are either left sticking outside the skin or completely under the skin depending on the exact method of joint fusion. Bone grafts, either from the patient's own body (often the wrist, elbow, or hip) or from a cadaver, may be required to help promote healing of the arthrodesis site. The goal is to eliminate the joint between the two bones where the arthritis was present so that they heal into one solid bone with no motion.

For arthroplasty, either a tendon or implantable prosthesis will be used to maintain a joint space in the area which was previously arthritic. The goal is to maintain motion across the joint that was previously arthritic, while eliminating most of the preoperative pain. These procedures are done under general or regional anesthesia.

Risks of the Procedure:

The risks of the procedure include infection at the surgical site, non-healing of the arthrodesis, injury to arteries or nerves in the area of the surgical incisions (particularly numbness around the surgical incision is common), painful hardware that would later be removed after the fracture is healed, persistent pain in the surgical area or the bone graft site, stiffness after healing, and possible need for further surgery.

Procedure Alternatives, if any:

The alternatives to the surgery are nonoperative treatment using splints, oral pain medicine, injections, and activity modifications.

Probable Consequences of Refusing Procedure:

The probable consequences from refusing the procedure are progressive pain and deformity from advancing arthritis.

Person(s) Performing the Procedure:

The key portions of this procedure will be performed by an attending physician with the assistance of the Orthopaedic Resident Staff. The parts of the procedure performed by Residents will be in accordance with hospital policies, based on their skill set, and under the direct supervision of the attending physician.