



Our pain can't wait.
Fix joint replacement waiting times.



Why joint replacements matter

Over 200,000 joint replacement operations take place in England each year. More than 90% of people who have hip and knee replacements have osteoarthritis. The pain of waiting for surgery can become unbearable. Every day tasks, such as getting out of bed or going to work, can become impossible. Joint replacement surgery can restore mobility, reduce pain and give people back their independence. It transforms lives and can be people's final hope when other ways, such as exercise and painkillers, no longer work.

In England, people currently have the right to start consultant-led treatment for joint replacement within 18

weeks of referral from their GP. This legal right is set out in the Handbook to the NHS Constitution. However, this guarantee is now under review.

How long are people waiting for joint replacements?

Despite an NHS guarantee to treatment within 18 weeks of referral, people are often waiting much longer for their joint replacement. In October 2019, Versus Arthritis commissioned research on hip and knee joint replacement waiting times in England. Every NHS Trust was asked to report how long people had waited after referral for hip or knee joint replacement.

Figures collected from more than 63,000 hip and knee surgeries reveal that: 

30,000

W A I T E D

O V E R

18

W E E K S

17,000

W A I T E D

O V E R

26

W E E K S

2,400

W A I T E D

O V E R

52

W E E K S


30,000 broken promises. This is unacceptable.

This means that in one year alone almost 30,000 people waited more than 18 weeks to start their joint replacement treatment. There was also wide variation in performance across NHS Trusts, with some doing operations much more swiftly than others.

And that's only part of the story. Worryingly, not all NHS Trusts were able to respond due to limits in their data collection. Plus, the NHS does not publish national statistics on joint replacement waiting times. We don't know the full truth.

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www.versusarthritis.org/rightontime



The pain from the arthritis in my knees is terrible. It makes doing simple things impossible. It never stops and sometimes it's just too much and I can't bear it.

I'm living from one month to the other in the hope that I'll get a letter in the post with a surgery date.

Rob, waiting for joint replacement surgery

Why do we need to act now?

The NHS is currently reviewing how waiting times are measured. This could lead to the existing guarantee to start joint replacement treatment within 18 weeks of referral being removed. This puts this fundamental NHS guarantee to a maximum waiting time at risk. We must take urgent action to stop this happening.

Why is this right to treatment important?

Taking away people's NHS rights is unacceptable. The failure to meet the existing target cannot justify removing the 18-week guarantee to treatment. A maximum waiting time gives people vital hope and assurance that they will receive treatment.

The NHS is under pressure. But, as our population ages, more people will develop arthritis and could face an agonising wait for joint replacement surgery.

We are calling for:

- The Government to keep people's NHS guarantee to treatment within 18 weeks
- An NHS action plan to improve access to joint replacements and reduce waiting times
- Increased accountability for the NHS to deliver joint replacements
- The regular publication of waiting times for joint replacement surgery

The Government must act now to give vital certainty to those struggling in pain.

Keep our treatment guarantee. **Reduce** waiting times. **Improve** access to surgery.

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SIGN THE PETITION NOW
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