



SCAN TO WATCH VIDEO

Can I Do Stairs After a Hip or Knee Replacement?

Stairs are one of the most common concerns patients raise before a hip or knee replacement. The good news is that most patients can manage stairs safely within days of surgery — but technique matters enormously. The mnemonic “Good leg to heaven, bad leg to hell” is the guiding principle: the strong leg always leads going up, and the operated leg always leads going down. This guide walks through the practical steps, what to watch for, and when you can expect to manage stairs more independently.

THE TECHNIQUE

01 First Attempt

Stairs typically first attempted Day 1–2 post-op with a physiotherapist.

02 Going Up

“Good leg to heaven” — lead with the non-operated leg going up.

03 Going Down

“Bad leg to hell” — lead with the operated leg going down.

04 Use the Handrail

Always use the handrail; take one step at a time initially.

AT A GLANCE

FIRST ATTEMPT

Day 1–2 Post-Op

GOING UP

Good Leg First

GOING DOWN

Operated Leg First

INDEPENDENT

4–6 Weeks

“Good leg to heaven,
bad leg to hell.”

— Dr Chien-Wen Liew

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. When can I do stairs after my operation?

Most patients attempt stairs with a physiotherapist on Day 1 or 2 after surgery. The technique matters more than speed — patience in the first 2–4 weeks is key.

Q. Does it matter which leg goes first?

Yes. Going up, the strong leg leads (“good leg to heaven”). Going down, the operated leg leads (“bad leg to hell”). This rule applies for both hip and knee replacements.

Q. How long until I can manage stairs confidently?

Most patients manage stairs with minimal difficulty by 4–6 weeks. Hip patients often progress faster than knee patients due to the nature of the recovery.

ABOUT THE SURGEON

Dr Chien-Wen Liew exclusively performs total hip replacements via the direct anterior approach and total knee replacements via kinematic alignment only. He utilises patient-specific technology for both procedures, and practices from Orthopaedics 360 — within the Eastwood Private Hospital Precinct.

Dr Chien-Wen Liew

Hip and Knee Replacement Surgeon

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