

# WHO'S ON YOUR CARE TEAM?

ORTHOPAEDIC SURGEON  
ANESTHESIOLOGIST  
CERTIFIED REGISTERED NURSE ANESTHETIST  
PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT  
NURSE PRACTITIONER  
REGISTERED NURSE  
FIRST ASSISTANTS  
REGISTERED NURSE FIRST ASSISTANTS  
SURGICAL TECHNOLOGIST  
PHYSICAL THERAPIST



Supporting Collaborative,  
Physician-Led Healthcare Teams

**AAOS**  
AMERICAN ACADEMY OF  
ORTHOPAEDIC SURGEONS

Your orthopaedic care team of highly trained professionals is led by your orthopaedic surgeon, with each team member playing a critical role in ensuring your safety and recovery.

## ORTHOPAEDIC SURGEON

- **Training:** Bachelor's degree (4 years), medical school (4 years), orthopaedic residency (5 years), may do fellowship in a specialty (1 year), and board certification.
- **Role:** Leads your care, performs surgeries, and makes key treatment decisions.
- **Expertise:** Highly trained in musculoskeletal care, surgery, and treatment options specific to your needs.

## ANESTHESIOLOGIST

- **Training:** Bachelor's degree (4 years), medical school (4 years), residency in anesthesiology (4 years), and board certification.
- **Role:** Manages your anesthesia during surgery and monitors your vital signs to ensure comfort and safety throughout the procedure.
- **Expertise:** Highly trained in pain management and critical care, the anesthesiologist ensures you remain safe and medically stable during surgery.

## CERTIFIED REGISTERED NURSE ANESTHETIST (CRNA)

- **Training:** Bachelor of Science in Nursing (4 years), followed by a Master's or Doctoral degree in Nurse Anesthesia (2-3 years), and national certification.
- **Role:** Administers anesthesia, monitors your vital signs, and collaborates with the anesthesiologist and surgical team to ensure comfort and safety during surgery.
- **Expertise:** Specializes in anesthesia care, pain management, and intraoperative monitoring, ensuring patient stability and optimal outcomes throughout the procedure.

## PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT (PA)

- **Training:** Bachelor's degree (4 years), Master's degree in Physician Assistant Studies (2-3 years), and certification through the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA).
- **Role:** Works closely with your orthopaedic surgeon, assisting in diagnosis, minor procedures, and follow-up care. May be part of the surgical team as an assistant.
- **Expertise:** Trained to perform medical exams, order tests, and support your surgeon in treatment planning and recovery management.

## NURSE PRACTITIONER (NP)

- **Training:** Bachelor of Science in Nursing (4 years), followed by a Master's or Doctoral degree in Nursing (2-4 years), and state licensure with national certification.
- **Role:** Provides advanced care, including diagnosing and managing conditions, prescribing medication, and collaborating with your orthopaedic surgeon on treatment plans.
- **Expertise:** Highly skilled in patient care management, NPs play a critical role in monitoring your progress, ensuring continuity of care, and addressing any concerns during your recovery.

## REGISTERED NURSE (RN)

- **Training:** Bachelor of Science in Nursing (4 years) and state licensure.
- **Role:** Provides day-to-day care, monitors your vitals, administers medication, and coordinates care.
- **Expertise:** Focused on patient comfort and safety, RNs ensure that your care plan is followed and communicate any concerns directly to your surgeon or PA.

## FIRST ASSISTANTS (FA) AND REGISTERED NURSE FIRST ASSISTANTS (RNFA)

- **Training:** FAs may include certified surgical technologists (CST) with additional training, while RNFAs complete Bachelor of Science in Nursing (4 years) and specialized first assistant training with certification.
- **Role:** Assists the surgeon directly during the procedure, including handling surgical instruments, suturing, and controlling bleeding.
- **Expertise:** Highly skilled in providing intraoperative support, FAs and RNFAs enhance surgical efficiency and patient safety by working closely with the surgical team to optimize outcomes.

## SURGICAL TECHNOLOGIST

- **Training:** Bachelor's degree or certification from a surgical technologist program (1-2 years).
- **Role:** Prepares the operating room, ensures the surgeon has the necessary tools, and helps maintain a sterile environment.
- **Expertise:** Works during surgery to assist the surgical team and support your safety.

## PHYSICAL THERAPIST (PT)

- **Training:** Bachelor's degree, followed by a Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) degree (3 years) and state licensure.
- **Role:** Helps you regain strength and mobility post-surgery, assisting in your rehabilitation.
- **Expertise:** Specializes in movement and recovery, working with your surgeon to tailor a rehabilitation plan that meets your recovery goals.

## Understanding Trainees, Medical Students, Residents, and Fellows

**Medical Students:** Individuals enrolled in medical school (4 years) who are learning the foundations of medicine. They may observe and assist with patient care but do not make independent medical decisions.

**Trainees:** A general term that includes medical students, residents, and fellows who are in different stages of learning and gaining hands-on experience in patient care under supervision.

**Residents:** Medical school graduates undergoing specialized training in a specific field, such as orthopaedics. An orthopaedic residency last 5 years, and is typically followed by an additional year of fellowship. Residents work under the supervision of licensed physicians and gain progressively more responsibility as they advance.

**Fellows:** Physicians who have completed their residency training and are pursuing additional specialized training in a specific subspecialty. Orthopaedic fellowships typically last 1-2 years. Fellows work closely with attending physicians, often performing advanced procedures and taking on greater responsibility in patient care under supervision.

Each of these individuals plays an important role in your care by contributing to a learning environment focused on excellence and safety, always under the close supervision of experienced healthcare providers.