



What Is Orthopedics?

The EmERGE Ortho—Triangle Region Guide to Orthopedists, Orthopedic Conditions, Treatment Options, and More



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What is an Orthopedist?

An orthopedist (also known as an [orthopedic surgeon](#)) is a doctor who specializes in treating injuries and diseases of the musculoskeletal system. This system includes bones, joints, muscles, ligaments, tendons, and nerves. If you have a problem with a body part that helps you move and stay active, you will want to see an orthopedist for a diagnosis and treatment.

Most orthopedists specialize in a particular body part, condition, or type of surgery. For example, some orthopedists focus on treating orthopedic trauma or oncology (bone cancer), while others focus on pediatrics or sports medicine. Some orthopedic surgeons focus on joint reconstruction or replacement.

Other common specialty areas include:

- *Back, neck, and spine*
- *Shoulder and elbow*
- *Wrist and hand*
- *Hip*
- *Knee*
- *Ankle and foot*

There is some overlap among the specialties, so different specialists may treat the same body parts. In some cases, the specific condition or cause of the injury determines which specialist is best for an individual patient.

What does it mean to be board-certified?

When comparing orthopedic surgeons, you may notice many are designated as “board certified.” EmergeOrtho—Triangle Region is proud to be home to some of the most accomplished, experienced orthopedic surgeons in the Southeastern United States, most of whom are board certified.

Board certification indicates the provider’s expertise and demonstrates the knowledge and experience necessary to provide the highest level of care to every patient. It also shows a doctor’s commitment to bringing patients the highest-quality, most advanced care possible.

The American Board of Orthopedic Surgery certifies orthopedists. The voluntary certification requires a four-year degree from an accredited medical school and five years of orthopedic residency training. Candidates must also pass a written exam and, after at least 17 months of practice in a single location, pass an oral exam. During the oral exam, the surgeon must present at least 12 patient cases to a board of reviewers, which evaluates the provider’s performance.

Difference Between Orthopedists and Other Doctors

If you experience an injury or have an ongoing issue with your muscles, joints, or another part of the musculoskeletal system, where do you seek medical treatment?

In an emergency, you probably go to the urgent care center or emergency room. Otherwise, you might make an appointment with your primary care provider. Primary care providers are usually the first point of contact for any type of medical care. They are trained in internal medicine and prepared to diagnose and treat illness but typically lack the specialized training of an orthopedist.

When you see a primary care doctor for an orthopedic issue, particularly when you are unsure of the cause of your symptoms, the doctor will likely refer you to an orthopedist. An orthopedist has the expertise to provide specialized treatment to support a full recovery, often in less time.



Non-Surgical Orthopedic Treatment Options

Some patients are alarmed when they are referred to an orthopedic surgeon, assuming that their treatment will require surgery.

That is not always the case. Most orthopedists commit to trying conservative, non-surgical methods whenever possible, reserving surgery as a last resort. Certainly cases exist when surgery is the best or only option (for example, in an orthopedic trauma case) but treatments such as medication or physical therapy typically act as the first course of action.

Some of the most common non-surgical orthopedic treatments include:

Bracing.

You may need a device to hold your bones or joints in place while they heal. These include casts, splints, braces, and slings.

Injections.

Joint conditions may respond to treatment with cortisone or other steroid injections, viscosupplementation, or platelet-rich plasma therapy.

Medication.

Most orthopedists recommend over-the-counter, non-steroidal medications to reduce pain and inflammation.

Occupational therapy.

Occupational therapists help patients strengthen fine motor skills and learn ways to perform daily tasks.

Orthotics.

Orthopedists may prescribe custom shoe inserts to support proper foot positioning to reduce pain and limit wear and tear on joints.

Physical therapy.

Working with a physical therapist can help you build strength, regain range of motion, learn activity modifications to reduce pain, and more.





The Most Common Orthopedic Surgeries

If your condition does not respond to conservative measures and you need orthopedic surgery, your doctor may recommend one of the following procedures based on your condition.

Soft tissue repair.

These surgeries treat damaged or torn muscles, ligaments, or tendons. For example, surgery to repair a torn tendon or ligament such as the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) in the knee or the rotator cuff in the shoulder.

Internal fixation.

Bone fractures may need an internal fixation surgery to place hardware such as pins, screws, plates, and rods into the bones to hold them in place while they heal.

Release surgery.

Patients with carpal tunnel syndrome may undergo release surgery to alleviate pain, numbness, and weakness in the hands by releasing the carpal tendon to reduce pressure on the median nerve.

Fusion.

Most often performed on the spine, fusion procedures involve using bone grafts and/or internal fixation to connect two bones. Eventually, the bones heal and fuse into one, giving the spine more stability and reducing back pain.

Joint replacement.

Joint replacement procedures involve replacing some or all of a damaged or diseased joint. Knee and hip replacements are the most common, but other joints, like the elbow and shoulder, can also benefit from these procedures.

Osteotomy.

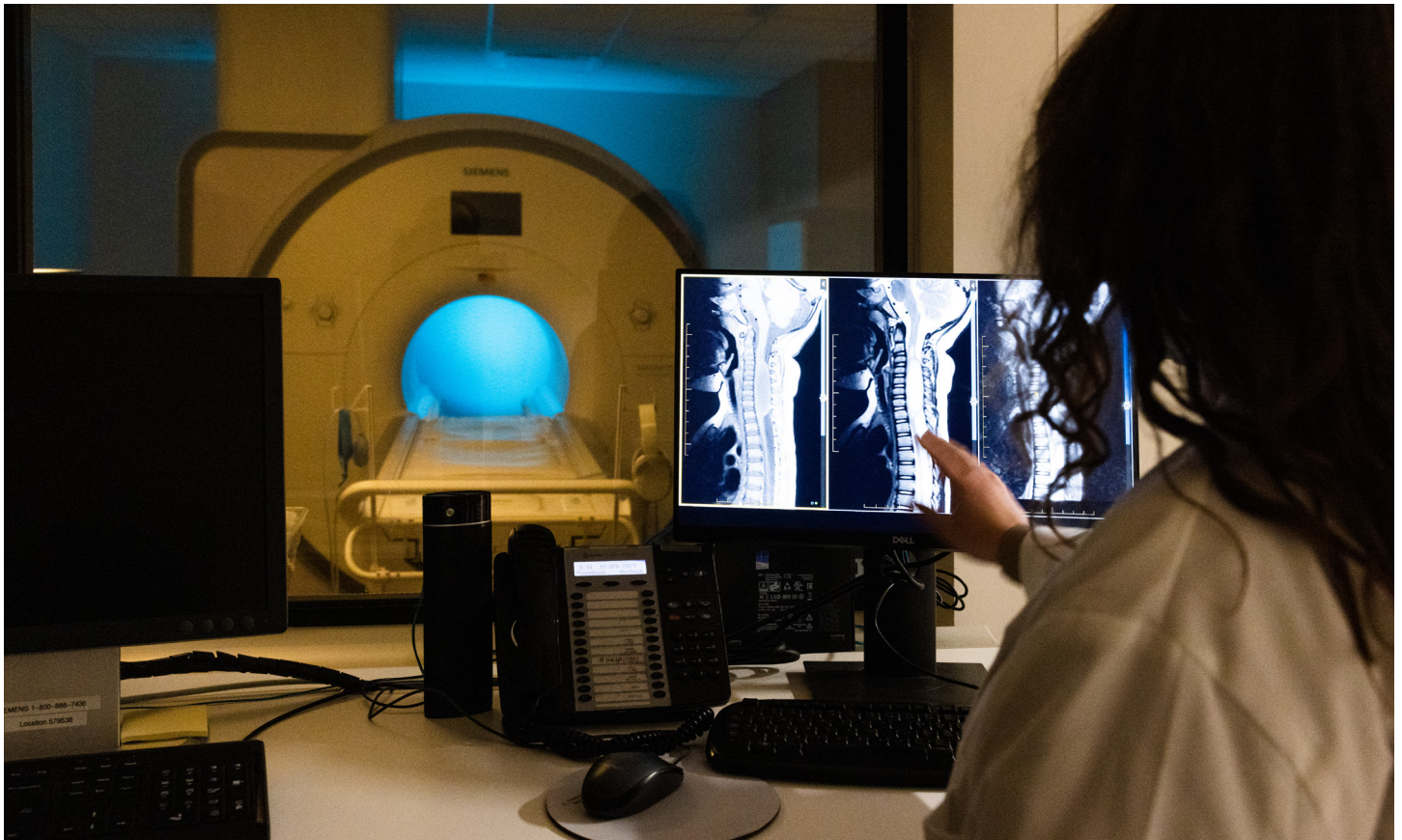
Orthopedists sometimes perform surgeries that require cutting and repositioning a part of a bone.

When to See an Orthopedist

Any time you injure part of your musculoskeletal system or have symptoms related to your joints or other parts of the system, make an appointment to see an orthopedist. More specifically, see a doctor for:

- *Soft tissue injury that does not improve after 48 hours of at-home care.*
- *Chronic pain in any joints or bones.*
- *Stiffness or limited range of motion in any joint.*
- *Swelling or inflammation.*
- *Popping, clicking, grinding, or snapping noises when moving any joint, even if not accompanied by pain.*
- *Numbness or tingling in any extremity.*
- *Symptoms that interfere with your normal daily activities.*





What to Expect When You See an Orthopedic Surgeon

When you have your first appointment with an EmergeOrtho—Triangle Region orthopedic surgeon, you can expect compassionate, comprehensive care focused on your unique needs, condition, and goals. Our team is committed to using the most advanced and innovative treatments and techniques to help everyone “Emerge Stronger. Healthier. Better.”

- *At your first EmergeOrtho appointment, you can expect:*
- *A full review of your medical history, symptoms, and any treatments you have tried so far.*
- *A complete physical examination.*

- *X-ray imaging. If necessary, you may be scheduled for additional imaging, including CT scans or MRI.*
- *A preliminary diagnosis and full explanation of your condition.*
- *A personalized treatment plan and recommendations, designed to help you heal and recover as quickly as possible.*

While EmergeOrtho orthopedists are committed to the most conservative, non-invasive treatments possible, if you need surgery your provider will discuss the options, risks, and benefits with you.

Orthopedic Conditions and The Treatment Options Available at EmergeOrtho—Triangle Region

Back/Neck/Spine

Conditions:

- Chronic back pain
- Herniated or bulging disc
- Nervous System Disorders
- Sciatica
- Scoliosis
- Spinal instability
- Spinal stenosis
- Spine and neck fractures
- Spondylolisthesis (slipped vertebrae)

Treatments:

- Discectomy
- Foraminotomy
- Kyphoplasty
- Laminectomy
- Spinal decompression
- Spinal fusion

Shoulder/Arm/Elbow

Conditions:

- Arthritis
- Bicep injuries
- Bursitis
- Elbow pain, tingling, numbness
- Fractures
- Frozen shoulder
- Rotator cuff injuries
- Shoulder dislocation
- Shoulder instability
- Shoulder impingement
- Shoulder separation
- Tendinitis
- Throwing injuries

Treatments:

- Golfer's elbow release
- Rotator cuff surgery
- SLAP repair
- Shoulder joint replacement

- Tendon repairs
- Tennis elbow release

Wrist/Hand

Conditions:

- Arthritis
- Carpal tunnel syndrome
- Cysts
- Dupuytren's Contracture
- Fractures
- Sprains
- Tendinitis
- Tendon injuries
- Trigger finger

Treatments:

- Carpal tunnel release
- Cyst removal
- Fracture repairs
- Ligament reconstructive surgery
- Joint replacements

Hip

Conditions:

- Arthritis
- Hip dysplasia
- Hip fracture
- Hip impingement
- Labral tears

Treatment:

- Hip joint replacement
- Hip osteotomy
- Hip preservation surgery
- Labral repair

Knee

Conditions:

- Arthritis
- Kneecap injuries
- Ligament injuries (ACL, MCL, LCL, PCL, MPFL)
- Sprains

Treatments:

- Knee arthroscopy to repair ligaments and cartilage
- Knee joint replacement
- MAKOplasty partial knee resurfacing

Ankle/Foot

Conditions:

- Achilles tendon injuries
- Arthritis
- Bunions
- Fractures
- Hammertoe
- Neuromas
- Plantar fasciitis
- Sprains
- Stress fractures

Treatments:

- Joint replacement or reconstruction
- Hammertoe corrections
- Tendon repair and reconstruction

Orthopedic Physical Therapy

Many EmergeOrtho—Triangle Region patients complete [physical therapy](#) as part of their treatment plan. Physical therapists use your orthopedist’s diagnosis, as well as their own observations and evaluations, to develop a treatment plan that helps you gain strength, improve your range of motion, increase balance and stability, and manage pain.

Physical therapy is often part of an initial conservative treatment plan. Working with a therapist can help you avoid surgery by helping improve strength and flexibility and “re-training” you in how to perform movements without pain or further damage.

For patients who have undergone orthopedic surgery, physical therapy can be critical both before and after certain procedures. Once the surgeon has “fixed” a problem surgically, physical therapists help you regain function and learn how to move safely to prevent re-injury.



Make an Appointment to See an EmergeOrtho—Triangle Region Orthopedic Surgeon Today

As the largest physician-owned orthopedic practice in North Carolina, EmergeOrtho provides unparalleled access to some of the most experienced providers and world-class care, all close to home. With subspecialty teams focused on providing advanced, state-of-the-art orthopedic care, you can rest assured you are in good hands.

If you need orthopedic care, make an appointment with an EmergeOrtho—Triangle Region provider today to begin exploring your options. We are here to help you Emerge Stronger. Healthier. Better. You can [request an appointment](#), [self-schedule an appointment](#), or call us anytime at (919) 220-5255.





Triangle Region

(919) 220-5255