

Total Knee Replacement

What is Total Knee Replacement?

Total knee replacement is a surgical procedure where the worn out surfaces of the knee are resurfaced with metal and plastic components. Over time, the cartilage that cushions the bones can wear away, cause pain and discomfort and make simple pleasures like walking and shopping unbearable. Knee replacement can reduce or eliminate pain, allow easier movement and get you back to normal life.

Who is a Candidate?

Knee replacement surgery may be considered for those suffering from arthritic knee pain that severely limits the activities of daily living. It is only recommended after careful examination and diagnosis of your particular joint problem and only after more conservative measures such as exercise, physical therapy and medications have proven ineffective.

What Kind of Knee Implant is Best?

There are many kinds and designs of knee implants available today and no one design or type is best for every patient or their particular situation. Each surgeon selects the implant that they believe is best for their patient's needs based on a number of factors including age, activity level, the implant's track record and his or her comfort with the instruments associated with the particular implant. If you have specific questions regarding implants, your surgeon will be happy to answer them for you.

How Long Will I Be in the Hospital?

With improvements in surgical techniques and post-op care, it is now common for many patients to be able to go home from the hospital after two or three days. If you have both knees replaced at the same time, the stay can be a day or two longer. Of course, each patient is different, but the goal should be for you to recover in the comfort and privacy of your own home as soon as possible.

How Long is the Recovery Period?

Once again, this can vary from person to person, but most people will need to use an ambulation aid such as a walker for 4 weeks or so. Driving may be possible in 2 to 3 weeks and activities such as golf and bowling can be resumed in as few as 10 to 12 weeks. Some activities such as singles tennis and skiing are not recommended after knee replacement. Most people will be able to go straight home from the hospital, though some patients, particularly those who live alone, may need to spend a few days at a rehabilitation center or nursing home. Keep in mind that healing and recovery times can vary.

How Successful is Knee Replacement?

Knee replacement is recognized as one of the most successful procedures in all of medicine. In the United States, over 400,000 people have their knees replaced each year and a recent panel of independent experts determined that ninety percent of those opting for knee replacement reported “fast pain relief, improved mobility and better quality of life.”

What Are the Risks?

Even though knee replacement surgery is considered a very successful procedure, it is major surgery and as with any surgery, there are risks you need to be aware of. Possible complications include:

- Blood clots in your leg veins
- Infection
- Implant loosening
- Fractures
- Nerve or blood vessel damage
- Knee stiffness

Your surgeon and healthcare team will be taking great care to minimize the risk of these and other complications. Keep in mind that complications are relatively rare, but they need to be understood by you and your family. Your surgeon will be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

How Much Does Total Knee Replacement Hurt?

You will experience some discomfort after surgery, but be assured we will be doing everything we can to keep you as comfortable as possible. Pain after surgery is quite variable from person to person, and not entirely predictable, but modern medications and improved anesthetic techniques greatly enhance our ability to control pain and discomfort after surgery.