

WHAT YOU “KNEE’D” TO KNOW ABOUT JOINT REPLACEMENT

This past year, over 200,000 fellow Americans had their arthritic knees replaced. Total knee replacement began in the 1970s, and has evolved as a safe and reliable surgical procedure to help patients with debilitating pain and deformity of their joints. When I tell my patients that their knee replacement is a good surgical option to relieve their pain with walking and other daily activities, sometimes the phrase “total replacement” frightens my patients. The reality is that when I perform a knee replacement, the muscles, tendons, and collateral ligaments, as well as most of the bone stock, is fully preserved. Even the knee cap (patella) is retained.

The best way to explain knee replacement surgery is by comparing it to a common dental procedure, such as the crowning of a worn out tooth. Only the degenerative bone and cartilage is removed, followed by placement of a metal (titanium)/high impact plastic implant (polyethylene), which is cemented on the sculpted ends of the distal femur and proximal tibia. The undersurface of the knee cap is re-shaped to allow placement of a stable plastic disc. No more than several millimeters of bone is removed from the surface of the arthritic knee in order to perform the “total knee replacement”.

Knee replacement gives a stable and comfortable joint which allows patients to walk considerable distances, as well as enjoying the use of stairs and engaging in low impact sports activities.

According to recent published studies, more than 90% of patients are pleased with their knee replacement surgeries 10 years later. Less than 1% of patients will have a complication that requires further medical care. When surgery is performed by an experienced orthopaedic surgeon in a hospital that performs a considerable volume of joint surgeries, the complication rates are quite low. When the orthopaedic surgeon is **personally involved** in the perioperative care of the patient, as well as supervising an orthopaedic team of nurses, therapists and assistants, patient satisfaction is exceedingly high.

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