



Getting a Leg Up on Knee Replacement Surgery

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When arthritis causes pain and stiffness, and walking becomes a chore, your quality of life is affected. For some, it may mean giving up golf, tennis, biking or walking. For others, it affects even the simpler activities of everyday life, such as getting dressed, grocery shopping, or getting up from a chair. When symptoms have such a marked impact on daily life, it is time to look at possible solutions.

Initial treatment is aimed at reducing the daily discomfort with activity modification, rest, ice, and anti-inflammatory medications. Weight loss is also suggested to ease the pain of arthritis and slows the progression of the disease. Occasional cortisone, or other supplemental injections, may offer relief. Once non-invasive methods no longer suffice, knee replacement surgery can be considered.

Knee replacement surgery is an excellent treatment alternative when pain becomes more severe and interferes with your quality of life. Knee replacement is one of the most successful operations performed annually in the United States. More than 200,000 knee operations are performed each year. Originally, knee replacement surgery was performed by making bone cuts for the implants using only the naked eye. Over time, special cutting blocks, jigs, and alignment rods were developed to improve the accuracy of the final alignment of the prosthesis and the limb. The better the alignment, the better the expected short and long term results.

More recently, computer assisted surgery has become available. The use of computers during knee replacement surgery provides the surgeon with information to perform the procedure more accurately. The surgeon is still in charge of the procedure, but the computer enhancement provides more information to maximize the final result — a knee replacement in proper alignment. The better aligned the knee, the longer it will last. Incisions are smaller and less or no muscle is cut, meaning recovery could be much faster. Patients can usually resume their activities without any pain.