



Knee Replacement Surgery Guide



Your life is our life's work.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 Deciding on Surgery | 3-7

2 Types of Surgery | 8-9

3 What to Expect | 10-11

4 Recovery and Rehab | 12-14

5 Post-op FAQs | 15-16

1

Deciding on Surgery

This is an exciting time for you. By considering knee replacement surgery, you're taking a giant step toward living with more freedom of movement and less pain. Mercy's orthopedic surgeons have helped thousands of patients reclaim their lives with knee replacement procedures. Our patients can't believe how much more enjoyable life is once they're free from the limitations and constant pain of knee issues.

Our joint replacement experts have prepared this guide to help you understand what the knee replacement procedure involves and what you can expect on the road to regaining your mobility.

Signs That It's Time

Benefits of Surgery

**Risks of
Delaying Surgery**

**How Did You Get
Here, Anyway?**

Of course, surgery is a big deal, and you probably have lots of questions, including: *how do I know if a knee replacement is the best solution for me?*

SIGNS THAT IT'S TIME

Questions to Ask Yourself:

1. Have you suffered from knee pain for three months or more?
2. Does the pain keep you from everyday activities like walking, using the stairs, getting in and out of the car, using the toilet, or standing or sitting for long periods of time?
3. Have you tried other relief methods, including rest, icing your knee, non-prescription medications, physical therapy, injections and/or weight loss?
4. Have you been diagnosed with bone-on-bone arthritis (meaning there's no cartilage left between the bones in your knee)?
5. Do you hear odd noises when you move your knee?
6. Is your knee unstable, giving way when you walk?
7. Does your knee look deformed (bowing in or out)?
8. Is your knee often swollen, and medications and rest don't help?
9. Does your knee pain wake you up at night?
10. Have you noticed a loss in range of motion over time?

If you answered "yes" to most or all these questions, it's time to talk with an orthopedic specialist about having a knee replacement.

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Deciding on Surgery

- ▶ When your knee pain limits your ability to do the things you want to, and non-surgical treatments have failed, it's time to consider knee replacement surgery.

Questions Your Orthopedist Will Consider:

1. How much does your knee pain affect your quality of life?
2. Have you tried non-surgical treatments?
3. How good is your general medical condition?

Joint replacement surgery is typically recommended for patients with advanced end-stage joint disease who have tried non-surgical treatment, but whose joints still don't function well and are causing disabling pain.

The decision to proceed with replacement is based on your fitness for surgery and how much your pain affects your quality of life. Prior to surgery, talk to your primary care doctor to ensure your health is good enough to undergo the anesthesia and rehabilitation associated with the surgery.

BENEFITS OF KNEE REPLACEMENT

Technology has made knee replacement surgery safer than ever, with quick recovery times and long-lasting results. The average age of a knee replacement patient is now younger than ever, just 65 years old, with patient ages ranging from 40-90 years of age.

Here's what you should expect after having knee replacement surgery:

- Less pain and discomfort
- Better mobility and range of motion
- Increased ability to perform daily activities
- Improved quality of life



82% of modern total knee replacements are still working **25 years** after surgery.

SOURCES: Pub Med, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, The Lancet

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Deciding on
Surgery

- ▶ Why wait? Start enjoying the freedom and comfort of your new knee now. Plus, choosing to have surgery sooner can prevent complications that might arise when you put it off.

POTENTIAL RISKS OF DELAYING SURGERY

If you're having severe symptoms, there could be a downside to putting off that knee replacement. What might happen?

- The muscles and ligaments around your knee could get weaker and tighter.
- Your knee could become more deformed, leading to a more difficult procedure with a greater likelihood of complications.
- You could lose mobility and quality of life due to chronic pain and loss of knee function.
- The longer you wait, the more damage could occur to tissues surrounding the knee.
- While waiting, you could develop additional medical conditions that complicate or prevent surgery.
- Further degeneration of the knee joint could complicate future treatment.

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Deciding on Surgery

► Causes of Joint Degeneration

- Arthritis
- Knee injury
- Joint infections
- Obesity

HOW DID YOU GET HERE, ANYWAY?

Your knee is made of three basic parts that move and work together to ensure a smooth motion and function. Over time, normal use causes the knee cartilage to wear away. This is called *joint degeneration*.

Other factors can speed up joint degeneration:

Arthritis

Osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis cause joint inflammation. As cartilage disappears, leaving bone to rub against bone, we feel pain, stiffness and swelling. Either of these conditions can lead to severe or “end-stage” arthritis.

Knee injury

A knee fracture, dislocation or serious ligament injury can cause long-term problems, making your knee vulnerable to further injury. Serious injuries can make your knee more prone to arthritis later in life.

Joint infections

These or other rare conditions that cause blood loss to your bones can lead to degeneration.

Obesity

According to the Arthritis Foundation, being just 10 pounds overweight puts an extra 15 to 50 pounds of pressure on your knees. This makes it more likely you’ll develop osteoarthritis (OA) or can make the disease worse if you already have it. Excess weight also acts to speed the destruction of cartilage in your knee.

2

Types of Surgery

MAIN PROCEDURES

Total Knee Replacement Surgery

Modern knee replacement surgeries are performed by orthopedic surgeons, who remove the worn cartilage from both sides of the joint, then replace it with an artificial joint made of metal, plastic or ceramic materials. This implant looks and functions much like your normal joint.

The materials used in your artificial knee are very strong and are designed to last a very long time inside your body.

Partial Knee Replacement Surgery

If you still have some healthy tissue and bone in your knee, you may be a candidate for this procedure. The surgeon resurfaces only one of the compartments of the knee (medial, lateral or knee cap).

Joint Revision Surgery

This procedure replaces implants that have become loose, damaged, infected or worn out.

Main Procedures

New Surgical Techniques and Innovations

► Factors That Determine Which Procedure Is Right for You

- Age and weight
- Bone density
- Joint condition
- Hopes and plans for future activities

► **New Surgical
Techniques and
Innovations**

- Outpatient Knee Replacement
- Mini-incision Procedures
- Robotic-assisted Knee Replacement
- Advancements in Pain Control

NEW SURGICAL TECHNIQUES AND INNOVATIONS

Outpatient Knee Replacement

By eliminating the need for a hospital stay, this procedure reduces the risk of infection and allows the patient to recover in the comfort of their own home.

Mini-incision Procedures for Partial Knee Replacement

This minimally invasive procedure reduces pain, scarring and recovery times.

Robotic-assisted Knee Replacement

This new precision technology allows the surgeon to achieve optimal alignment of the new joint in nearly 100% of patients.

Major benefits include:

- Precise implant positioning
- Surgical accuracy
- Fast recovery & mobility

Prior to surgery, your surgeon will use the robotic device to create a 3D model of your knee. This 3D model will enable your surgeon to plan many specifics of your knee replacement.

During the procedure, your doctor is in complete control of the device, guiding its every move. The robot will adjust to even the most minimal body movements to help your surgeon maintain pinpoint accuracy.

Major Advancements in Pain Control

Pain relief now lasts longer, as the surgeon applies a nerve block to the surgical area before closing the incision. This helps patients through the initial post-op period, allowing for shorter hospital stays.

3

Preparing for Surgery

Day of Surgery

What to Expect

PREPARING FOR SURGERY

Your journey to recovery begins many weeks before your actual surgery. Here's what you can expect:

- Educational pre-op emails containing procedural videos, facility directions and links to three important questionnaires that help us tailor our care to your specific needs
- Physical exam
- Pre-admission testing — typically x-rays, blood test, urine test and EKG
- Medication review and adjustments
- Dental health check and any needed work
- Consultations with your specialists, as needed (heart, lung, kidney or weight loss specialist)
- Paperwork, including consent forms
- Home preparation to ensure safe pathways, or discussion of alternatives to returning home during your recovery (e.g., staying with relatives, skilled care facilities or rehabilitation facilities)

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 What to Expect

► Day of Surgery

Pre-op

Surgery

Post-op

Discharge

DAY OF SURGERY

You'll arrive for your knee replacement procedure either at a hospital or surgery center. These days, it's considered an outpatient procedure, although you may need to stay overnight or a few days to make sure your recovery is on track.

Pre-op

Before surgery, your care team will go over all the steps needed, making sure you understand what to do to ensure the safest, most successful procedure and recovery.

Your anesthesiologist will discuss the benefits and risks associated with anesthesia, as well as the potential side effects that can occur. Once you receive anesthesia, you won't even be aware of the surgery as it's happening.

Surgery

The total time required for surgery will be different from patient to patient, depending on the complexity of your procedure. Generally, most knee replacement surgeries last one and a half to two hours, not including the preparation and recovery times.

Post-Op

After surgery, you'll be transported to an area called the Post Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU) or recovery room.

You'll spend an hour to an hour and a half in the PACU while you thoroughly recover from the effects of anesthesia.

After the PACU, you'll be moved to a room to begin your recovery. Most patients stay one night after their surgery, while many are discharged the same day. Rarely, a patient will need to stay more than one night.

Discharge

Before you're discharged from the hospital, your care team will explain your restrictions and limitations regarding knee motion. Following these instructions will optimize tissue healing.

The team will help schedule your post-surgical follow-up appointment with your orthopedic clinic. These appointments are scheduled two to four weeks after your hospital discharge. A care plan and additional follow-up appointments may also be established at this time.

Recovery and Rehab

TIMELINE OF RECOVERY

No doubt, you're wondering how long it will take you to recover after your knee replacement. There's no one answer. Recovery time may depend on your age, physical health and the complexity of your knee problem. However, this graphic will give you a general idea of how recovery progresses.



1-2 days post-surgery
Walking with assistance



4 weeks
Driving



6 weeks
Walking unaided



6 weeks
Regular activities



3-12 months
(depending on your condition pre-surgery)
Full recovery



10 months
Post-op survey

4

Timeline of Recovery

Managing Your Pain

First Days After Surgery

Follow-up Appointment

Physical Therapy

Occupational Therapy

Post-op Pathway

- ▶ In the weeks following surgery, you'll want to walk regularly and avoid sitting for long periods of time. Walking is especially important for your recovery.

MANAGING YOUR PAIN

Some degree of pain is unavoidable. Your care team's goal is to have your pain as well-controlled as possible. Tell your nurses about any pain you experience so your care team can get ahead of it.

FIRST DAYS AFTER SURGERY

Most patients who have total knee replacement surgery are ready to start walking with assistance the day after surgery. You'll likely use a walker and may be able to put some weight on the joint if you can tolerate it and if approved by your physician.

FOLLOW-UP APPOINTMENT

During your follow-up appointment, your new knee joint will be checked for strength, flexibility and overall progress. In addition, your physician's nurse practitioner or physician's assistant will also provide a new set of care guidelines and a list of activities you may now begin. As always, be sure to ask any questions you have.

► **Physical Therapy**

- Exercise
- Massage
- Heat and cold
- Cane/walker
- Safety info

► **Participation Is Key**

To ensure maximum success, it's important that you take part in therapy, both while you're in the hospital and after you're discharged.

PHYSICAL THERAPY

After discharge, you'll likely receive physical therapy in your home, either self-directed or supervised by a therapist. This will be followed by regular appointments at an outpatient therapy center, once you're up and around.

Physical therapists are highly trained to help manage your pain and help you move better. Their methods include:

Teaching you therapeutic exercises

Teaching you how to use assistive devices, including a cane or walker

Performing manual therapy, including joint and muscle massage

Providing health or safety information, including home exercise instruction

Applying heat packs or cold compresses to relieve pain or swelling

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

An occupational therapist will work to rebuild strength and function in your knee, so you become independent with activities of daily living, such as walking, climbing stairs and getting in and out of a bed.

POST-OP PATHWAY

About ten months after your surgery, you'll receive an email containing a post-op baseline questionnaire. It's important that you complete and return it to us.

5

Post-op FAQs

Post-op FAQs

When you have questions, never hesitate to ask your care team. Our goal is to make sure every patient is fully informed, so you'll feel comfortable and confident throughout your surgery and recovery.

Staying Informed

Many patients find it helpful to keep a dedicated notebook for doctor appointments so no question goes unasked and every answer is remembered.

FREQUENTLY ASKED POST-OP QUESTIONS

How often will I see my surgeon after surgery?

Your surgeon, physician assistant or nurse practitioner will follow your care throughout your hospital stay. Your surgeon will also want to see you for follow-up appointments in the office after you're discharged. Typically, appointments are scheduled two to four weeks after surgery.

How do I know if my incision is infected?

After surgery, you'll notice discolored skin, some swelling and minimal drainage around your incision. This is normal. If you experience painful redness, abnormal swelling, or increased or bad-smelling drainage from your incision, you may have an infection. A temperature over 101°F is another possible indicator. Call your surgeon's office if you think you have an infection.

When can I take a shower or bath?

Most patients will shower on the second day after surgery. When you return home, you may need special equipment, like a bath mat, hand-held showerhead or shower seat to help you bathe comfortably and safely. Your surgeon may also instruct you to cover your incision when you bathe.

When will I be able to drive again?

You shouldn't drive a car or other motor vehicle until your physician says it's okay to do so. You must be off pain medications before you will be cleared to drive again. In most cases, patients are able to resume driving about four weeks after surgery.

How should I sleep at night to keep my knee comfortable and safe?

Placing a pillow between your legs should help keep your knee comfortable and stable. You may sleep on your back or on either side, depending on what makes you most comfortable. Discuss with your surgeon the best position for sleeping.

Let Mercy Help You Get Back to Living the Life You Love.

The orthopedic team at Mercy is committed to treating every patient with compassionate care. We find joy in helping you reclaim your mobility and live your life as freely and fully as possible. If joint pain is limiting the way you live, please consult with us to explore all your options for a more active, enjoyable lifestyle.



To find an orthopedic clinic near you, scan the code or visit mercy.net/OrthoInfo