



QUESTIONS QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ANSWERS

Knee Replacement Surgery

When is Total Knee Replacement Surgery Needed?

Knee replacement is done when a knee is painful, damaged or diseased. The knee is replaced with a knee of man-made materials like plastic or metal.

The Surgery

You may be asleep during surgery. Or, you may be awake but have no feeling from the waist down. Your surgeon will talk to you about which choice to make.

- A tube to drain urine will be put in place. It will be removed 2-3 days after surgery.
- IV lines (tubes) will be put in your arm. These tubes supply you with:
 - antibiotics
 - nutrition
 - fluids
- The surgeon will:
 - make a cut over the problem knee. The cut is called an incision.
 - move the knee cap out of the way
 - remove damaged bone and tissue
 - put the new knee joint in place
 - close up the incision

After Surgery

After the surgery you will:

- have a large bandage and a drain tube on your knee
- have special stockings on your legs to reduce the risk of blood clots
- be taken to the recovery room. You will stay here until you wake up.
- be moved to your room after you wake up

Hospital Stay

- The hospital stay lasts 3-4 days. It will take 3 months to a year for you to recover fully.
- You will feel some pain. You will get medicine to make you feel as comfortable as possible.
 - You will be asked to walk and move your knee very soon after surgery.
 - Your surgeon may have you use a machine that slowly moves your knee. You use this machine while in bed.
 - You will get a walker or crutches to help you walk.

There are people at the hospital to help you with your needs after surgery.

- A physical therapist will meet with you the day after surgery. The physical therapist will teach you:
 - how much weight to put on your new knee
 - how to use crutches or a walker so you can safely:
 - walk
 - get into and out of chairs, cars, and more
 - go up and down stairs
 - exercises that will improve your:
 - strength
 - balance
 - knee motion

The physical therapist will also tell you what to avoid after surgery. Things you must not do with your new knee are:

- twist
- kneel
- turn
- put a pillow under your knee

An occupational therapist will also meet with you the day after surgery. The occupational therapist will teach you how to use special aids to help you:

- shower or bathe
- use the toilet
- dress

- do housework

The occupational therapist will also teach you how to do deep breathing exercises. You may also get treatments from a breathing therapist.

- Some people may have to go to a rehab hospital for a short while before going home.

Preparing Your Home for Your Return

Here are some things you can do to make your home safer.

- Make sure hand rails along the stairs and in the bath are bolted tightly to the wall.
- Sit in a firm chair with arm rests. It will be easier to get up.
- Get a foot stool so you can raise your leg from time to time during the day.
- Get a raised toilet seat.
- Use a shower bench or chair. It is easier and safer to sit while taking a shower.
- Take up all loose carpets and cords so you do not trip.
- Plan to live on the first floor for a short time after surgery. Avoid stairs.

Going Home Instructions

- Follow all instructions your surgeon gives you.
- You will go home with stitches or staples along your incision. Your surgeon will remove these several weeks after surgery. You must be very careful about your incision.
 - Do not soak the incision until it is completely dry and sealed.
 - Keep a bandage over the incision so your clothes do not rub on it.

Exercise is important to recovery. It strengthens your muscles. It increases your blood flow.

- Do the exercises you learned from your physical and occupational therapists every day.
- Your surgeon may have a physical therapist come to your home. Or, you may go to a therapy center for a few weeks.
- You should be able to go back to most daily activity within 3-6 weeks after surgery.

- Falling during the first few weeks after surgery can damage your new knee. Use your walker or crutches, or ask for help until you see improvement in your:
 - balance
 - knee movement
 - strength
- Start a walking program. Start slowly. First, walk in your home. Later, you can walk outside. Your surgeon or therapist will help you plan this program.
- Most people can go back to driving 4-6 weeks after surgery. **Be sure to get your doctor's okay.**

Problems after Surgery

You may feel or hear some unusual things after surgery. They usually go away with time. They are:

- feeling numb around your incision
- a clicking sound with knee bending or walking
- knee stiffness

Blood Clots

Blood clots may form during the first few weeks after surgery. Be sure to follow all your surgeon's instructions to prevent blood clots. This includes wearing your special stockings. Be sure to take the stockings off every day. Take a careful look at your skin. Put the stockings back on.

WARNING SIGNS OF BLOOD CLOTS

Call your doctor right away if you have any of the following:

- increased pain in the calf. Do not rub this area.
- tenderness or redness above or below the knee
- increased swelling in any part of your leg or foot
- sudden shortness of breath or chest pain. This may mean a blood clot has moved to your lung.

Infection

Infection is another problem that may happen after surgery. Germs can get into the blood by way of the mouth, bladder or skin. Be sure to tell your dentist or any other health care person that you had knee replacement surgery. You may need to take antibiotics to reduce the risk

of infection. You take them before you have anything done where instruments are put in the body, such as:

- dental work
- tests
- surgery

WARNING SIGNS OF INFECTION

Call your doctor right away if you have any of the following:

- a fever over 100 degrees that does not go away
- shaking, chills
- increased redness, tenderness or swelling at the incision
- draining from the incision
- increased knee pain when active or resting

How to Avoid Problems after Surgery

Problem

What to Do

blood clots

1. Wear your special anti-clot stockings.
2. Take your medicine.
3. Do your exercises, like pumping your ankles up and down.

infection

1. Take your medicine.
2. Keep the incision clean and dry.

pneumonia

1. Start moving around as soon as you can.
2. Do your deep breathing exercises.

artificial knee comes out of joint

1. Follow your surgeon's orders.
2. Do not put a lot of weight on your

knee.

3. Do not do movements your doctor told you to avoid.

You need to protect your new knee. There are some things you cannot ever do again. Your surgeon will give you a list of things you can and cannot do. The American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons has a booklet which lists these activities.

- **Dangerous Activities:** anything that stresses or jars the joints, such as:
 - jogging
 - jumping
 - running
 - hard physical work
 - contact sports like baseball or football where you may bump into someone or fall
- **Activities Not Recommended:**
 - power walking
 - hiking on steep or rough ground
 - skiing
 - repeated lifting of weights over 50 pounds
 - tennis
 - running upstairs
- **Activities You Can Expect to Do:**
 - normal walking
 - swimming
 - golf
 - driving
 - light hiking
 - ballroom dancing
 - light biking
 - normal stair climbing

What to Expect after Knee Replacement

- Your new knee will not let you do more than you did with your old knee.
- Your new knee may not bend as far as your old one did.
- You should be able to do your normal activities.
- Most people who have knee replacement have:
 - much less pain
 - much improvement in doing normal activities
- Your new knee will last 10 to 20 years. This depends on how much stress you put on it. You can control this by following your surgeon's cautions about:
 - the kinds of activities you can and cannot do
 - how much weight you can lift

- Keeping your own weight under control. Being overweight puts stress on joints.
- If you are young when you have surgery, you likely will need a second new knee at some point.

For More Information Contact:

St. Vincent Charity Hospital Rehabilitation Services Department: 216-363-2564

American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons: 222.orthoinfo.aaos.org

How can I find a Doctor?

St. Vincent Charity Hospital has doctors who have special training in knee replacement surgery. To contact one of our doctors call the:

Physician Referral Line at 1-800-223-8662

Visit our Web site at www.stvincentcharity.com

Our doctors serve with a deep respect for all. Their goal is to give the best care and education whether or not a person can pay.

St. Vincent Charity Hospital

2351 E. 22nd Street

Cleveland, Ohio 44115

216-861-6200

TTY: Ohio Relay 1-800-750-0750

St. Luke's Health Care Center

11201 Shaker Boulevard

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216-721-6900

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**ST. VINCENT CHARITY
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