

What Is Knee Replacement?

Knee replacement surgery removes the damaged parts of your knee joint and replaces them with new, artificial parts. If your knee causes you pain because of arthritis, injury or age, knee replacement surgery may be your best option to reduce the pain.

First, let's take a look at the knee. Your knees are the largest joints in your body, and you use them to do almost every physical activity every day. The bottom of your thighbone, top of your shinbone, and kneecap together form the knee. Cushioning the bones where they meet, is a layer of cartilage. A thin, smooth tissue covers the other surfaces of the knee joint and releases a special fluid. This fluid enables the bones to glide against each other and move smoothly. In a healthy knee, all of these parts work together without pain.

But over time, with injury, arthritis, disease, or just from daily use, parts of your knee can weaken. When the cartilage wears away and can no longer cushion the bones, they rub together leading to pain, inflammation, and stiffness. This is called arthritis, the most common cause of chronic knee pain. Your healthcare provider will decide the best surgery option for you based on your level of pain, your medical history, and the amount of damage to your knee, in order to restore joint function and relieve your pain. Total knee replacement surgery usually takes about one to two hours.

Through an eight-to-ten-inch incision, your healthcare provider will remove all of the damaged cartilage and bone and replace it with a new joint made of plastic, metal alloy and polymers. Special surgical cement may be used to attach the new joint parts to your existing natural bone and hold them in place. Your surgeon will carefully align the new joint to restore knee function and relieve your pain.

If you are having partial knee replacement, only one part of the knee is affected and replaced. The incision may be shorter and recovery time can be faster. No matter what type of knee replacement surgery you need, it is important that you prepare for the surgery before you have it. This can help your recovery go smoothly.

Talk to your healthcare provider about ways you can prepare for your knee replacement. Follow the instructions given and begin to do your pre-operative exercises now. The stronger your leg muscles are before surgery, the easier it will be for you to regain strength after surgery. You use your knees all day, every day. If they cause you pain, total knee replacement surgery can help.