



Knee replacement surgery for osteoarthritis related pain

HOW LIKELY ARE YOU TO BENEFIT?

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If you find it difficult to move or use your knee because of pain, and you have been told by your doctor that you have osteoarthritis in your knee, you may be wondering whether knee replacement surgery would improve your quality of life. The first thing to know is that experts have shown that there are several non-surgical ways to effectively treat your osteoarthritis¹⁻³ and it's important to try these first.

It's also helpful to understand more about osteoarthritis. In this factsheet, we'll dispel some of the common myths around this condition and some of the surgical treatment options. We'll also share with you the latest information on the characteristics of patients who find knee replacement surgery very successful, as well as the characteristics of patients who don't experience improvements; to help you reach the right decision for you.

Will your osteoarthritis symptoms continue getting worse no matter what?

No. Many people mistakenly think that their symptoms will continue to get worse regardless of what they do. But in fact, osteoarthritis symptoms can be effectively managed by doing things like strengthening exercises, increasing physical activity and losing weight.

When your osteoarthritis flares up – will these symptoms last?

While you might experience "flare-ups" from time to time, it's important to know that these more intense symptoms do not usually persist. Studies monitoring people with osteoarthritis over many years show that symptoms fluctuate over time but flare-ups are short. It's best not to make decisions about your treatment when you are experiencing a flare-up.

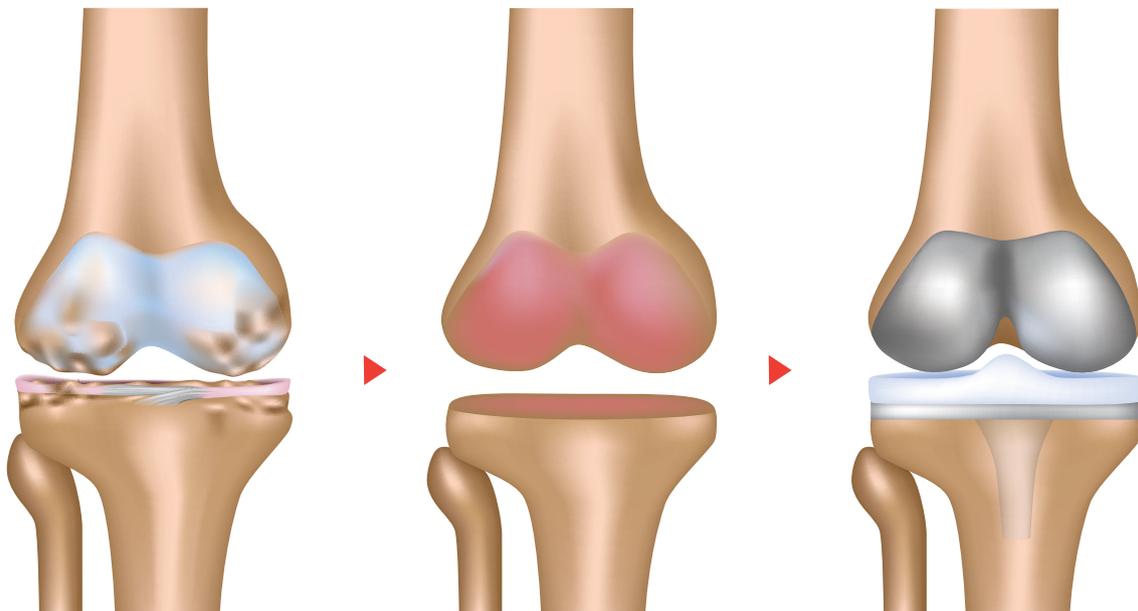


What is knee replacement surgery?

Knee replacement surgery is a technique that removes the rough surface of a joint and replaces it with an artificial joint (prosthesis).⁴ By doing this it corrects the alignment of the knee and aims to improve its movement. The most common reason for this operation is severe osteoarthritis.⁴

Does having osteoarthritis mean you'll need a total knee replacement surgery at some stage?

No. Most people can manage their symptoms through changes to their lifestyle, including a specialised strengthening program, physical activity plan and weight loss. In fact, less than 5% of Australians with osteoarthritis will go on to have knee replacement surgery.⁵



Painful joint

Bones are reshaped
to make sure the
prosthetic knee joint sits in
the correct position

Implants in place



Will a knee “arthroscopy” help your osteoarthritis?

No, arthroscopic surgery is not effective for treating knee osteoarthritis⁶ and research shows that it may increase your risk of needing a total knee replacement in the future.⁷ Australian and international clinical guidelines now advise against knee arthroscopies for treatment of osteoarthritis.^{8,9}

Arthroscopy involves inserting a camera and surgical instruments into the knee to examine the joint and clear out any small fragments of cartilage or bone. However, high quality studies have shown it is not effective for osteoarthritis.

When should you consider referral to an orthopaedic specialist to discuss the benefits/risks of total knee replacement surgery?

You may wish to discuss total knee replacement surgery with a specialist if you answer 'yes' to all questions below.

Do you experience extreme pain and/or stiffness that profoundly limits your ability to do every-day activities or quality of life, such as:



You have trouble getting up from the toilet

TICK WHERE APPLICABLE



Your pain is keeping you awake/waking you up at night so you can't get a good night's sleep



You can't walk up or down stairs



You are so afraid of falling or being stuck some distance from your home because of pain that you don't leave your house/ say no to activities and/or feel socially isolated

Have you worked with qualified health professionals to try all of the following, but still find you are experiencing extreme pain or other symptoms that are stopping you from participating in everyday activities?



Weight loss (if you are overweight)

TICK WHERE APPLICABLE



A targeted exercise program designed and supervised by a physiotherapist



Specialised equipment such as a knee brace or walking aid



Pain management including heat, TENS, pain coping activities, medicines

Who is less likely to benefit from total knee replacement surgery?

Total knee replacement surgery is not recommended for everyone - even if you answered 'yes' to all questions on the opposite page.

Of all Australians who receive a total knee replacement to treat osteoarthritis, one or two in every 10 people¹⁰ don't feel they benefit from the surgery and continue to experience pain and difficulty with daily activities. Recent research has identified which patients are most likely to improve after surgery.¹¹

Surgery may not benefit you if:¹¹

Your symptoms aren't severe— total knee replacement surgery works best in people with advanced osteoarthritis who experience extreme pain or other symptoms which limit their activity.



You are experiencing psychological distress such as depression or anxiety. Make sure your specialist is aware of any mental health condition that you have.



Your weight is in the obese category (your body mass index is ≥ 40). Losing weight is usually recommended before knee replacement surgery.



You are relatively young (eg <60 yrs). Young or middle-aged individuals should discuss their circumstances with their surgeon/doctor. Whilst total knee replacement surgery should be effective, there is a higher risk of needing a revision surgery because you will have more years living with the prostheses. Typically the revision surgery does not perform as well as the first joint replacement.



1 or 2 out of every 10 people continue to experience pain and/or struggle with everyday activities following total knee replacement surgery.

How long is recovery after total knee replacement surgery?



Surgery time spent in hospital¹³

5-6 days



Intensive rehabilitation following surgery (could be all at home or partially in hospital)

6 weeks



Stop using crutches or walking aid and resume normal leisure activities¹⁴

6 weeks



Resume driving when your knee can bend enough to get in and out of the car and you have good pain control with movement (following a discussion with your doctor / treating health professional)¹⁵

6 weeks



Pain and swelling settles down¹⁵

3 months



Return to work (depends on your employment type)¹⁵

1-3 months



“Heat” in the joint is no longer experienced

8-9 months



Achieve maximum benefit from surgery¹⁵

up to 2 years

What are the benefits of total knee replacement surgery?

For the right patient, total knee replacement surgery can dramatically improve quality of life, reduce pain and improve the ability to complete day-to-day activities.⁹

Eight to nine out of every 10 patients who have a total knee replacement for osteoarthritis report that “all or almost all” of their pain is gone within two years.¹²

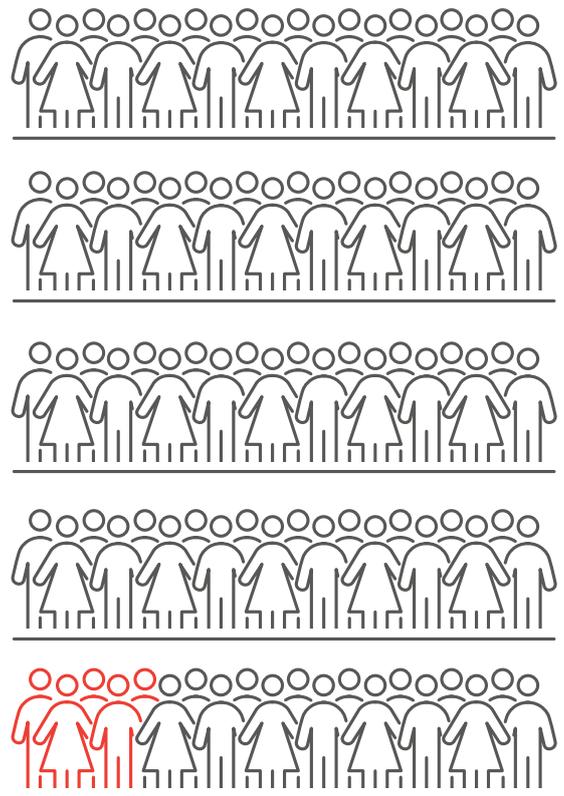
What are the risks of total knee replacement surgery?

During surgery

All major surgery involves a small but real risk of complications such as deep vein thrombosis (a blood clot that forms in the veins of the leg) and infection. You should discuss these risks and how to reduce/manage them in detail during your consultation with your surgeon. Risk increases with age, if you smoke or are overweight. This is why it is so important to talk to your surgeon about risks and benefits.

After surgery

During the 10 years after total knee replacement surgery, 5.3% of patients require another repeat surgery on the same knee because the prostheses has worn out or there are other problems.¹⁵ Additionally, 18.5% of patients who have a total knee replacement surgery in one knee, also go on to have a total knee replacement in the other knee within 5 years.¹⁶ So learning to manage your osteoarthritis early can potentially help you avoid several surgeries.



Five out of every 100 people will need repeat surgery within 10 years.¹²

Where can you find more information?

 Talk to your GP, physiotherapist, rheumatologist or surgeon.

 This resource from the UK lets you enter specific details about your situation and then see how other patients similar to you felt after their surgery.

Visit: <http://www.york.ac.uk/che/patient-outcome-tool>

 Arthritis Australia has created a website to help you stay up-to-date on treatment options, get a tailored management plan, assess your risk and connect with others.

Visit: <https://www.myjointpain.org.au/>

 Australian NPS MedicineWise has information on managing osteoarthritis.

Visit: <https://www.nps.org.au/medical-info/consumer-info/managing-osteoarthritis>

APPENDIX

50,609 Knee replacements in Australia in 2015

2,100,00 Self reported osteoarthritis 2014-15 (9% of Aus population)

Total knee replacement rate out of all osteoarthritis 2% (50k/2M)

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