

HELPFUL TIPS FOR HIP AND KNEE ARTHRITIS

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Over 42 million Americans have some form of arthritis. There are over 100 types of arthritis, but the two most common are osteoarthritis (wear and tear) and rheumatoid arthritis. Arthritis simply means inflammation of a joint causing pain, swelling, stiffness and often deformity. Severe arthritis interferes with a person's lifestyle and activities. As we get older our bodies change. Strength and muscle size decrease primarily due to inactivity. Bone mass and susceptibility to fractures increase. Ligaments and tendons become less elastic, making the joint vulnerable to over-use injuries. At least 30 minutes of physical exercise can help individuals feel good and prevent over-use medical conditions. Exercise helps keep the joints flexible as well as strengthening bone, cartilage and connective tissue around the joints.

Surgical Options:

Many advanced arthritic joint problems may require artificial joint replacement. More than 447,000 total joint replacement procedures are performed each year by Orthopedic Surgeons in the U.S. The most frequent reasons for replacing a joint is to relieve the pain and disability caused by severe arthritis. The decision to proceed with surgery should be made by you and your Orthopedist, only after you feel you understand as much about the procedure as possible. Most total joint replacements involve hip and knee joints, however, shoulder, ankle, finger and elbow replacements can also be performed. Individuals with a total joint replacement can lead an active lifestyle. Exercise is not only important in the recovery process, but also in years to come to maintain that active lifestyle.

Total Knee Replacement:

When a knee replacement procedure is performed you are basically resurfacing the joint. Only the arthritis is removed on the end of the femur (thighbone), tibia (top of the lower leg bone) and patella (kneecap). There are two types of artificial knee replacements, cemented or non-cemented. Both are still widely used. In many cases a combination of the two are used depending on the patient's age, lifestyle and surgeon's experience. The femoral component is made of metal as well as the tibial component with a thick, tough, smooth plastic spacer in between. The patella component (kneecap portion) is usually made of smooth, tough plastic. The biologic cement to hold the implants in place is made up of a type of epoxy. The new artificial knee joint usually lasts at least 15 years nationally. Usually you can begin walking on the new knee right away while beginning your exercises.

The Artificial Hip:

There are two parts to a total hip: the acetabular (socket) and the femoral (upper thigh stem). The femoral component is made of metal alloy with a smooth ball on top. The acetabular (socket portion) is usually made up of a metal shell with a dense smooth plastic liner. The femoral ball fits into the acetabular cup leaving the patient with a new ball bearing fit in their hip. These components can be either cemented or not cemented, depending upon the patient's age, lifestyle and the surgeon's preference. The surgery for either a hip or knee replacement usually takes a little over an hour to complete.

Total hip and knee surgery has been a very rewarding and successful procedure for people with severe hip and knee arthritis. Second opinions can be helpful in making the final decision to have surgery.

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