

TOTAL JOINT REPLACEMENT

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Ask the Doctor

Q. Lately, I have been experiencing severe joint pain that makes it difficult to perform everyday activities such as standing in line, bending to get in and out of my car, or playing with my grandchildren. What is total joint replacement, and who is a candidate for this procedure?

A. Total joint replacement is a surgical procedure that can eliminate pain and increase function in people with severe arthritis. The damaged joint surfaces of the hip, knee or shoulder are resurfaced with metal and plastic components. Usually the implants are cemented into place; sometimes they're "press-fitted," without cement, and surrounding bone grows into them. The patient's age, quality of bone and other factors determine the type and size of components to use, and whether or not to use cement. The surgery usually requires a few days in the hospital, followed by a period of additional physical therapy and rehabilitation.

Osteoarthritis is the most common condition leading to total joint replacement. However, joint replacement surgery is considered a "last resort" in the arthritis treatment pathway, which consists of medications, injections, braces and walking aids, arthroscopic surgery, physical therapy, glucosamine/chondroitin sulfate and other things that we try first. When conservative treatments such as these have failed, and the patient's activity level and mobility are significantly limited to the point where it negatively affects quality of life, that's when we



start talking about joint replacement.

When determining candidates for joint replacement, there are no rigid age restrictions. As a general guideline, however, the typical candidate is someone with osteoarthritis, older than 60, who can't walk for more than 15 to 30 minutes without resting and who may have pain that wakes them up at night. People with rheumatoid arthritis, a more destructive form of arthritis that usually occurs at a younger age, may be candidates for joint replacement when they are much younger.

Joint replacement has been around since the 1970s, and the longevity of implants has improved significantly. Today we're telling patients their implants may last from 10 to 15 years, though some have lasted as long as 20 years.

Total joint replacement is one of the most successful operations we have. It has allowed hundreds of thousands of patients across the country to enjoy a significant improvement in their quality of life.

A JOINT DECISION

If you're experiencing joint pain, talk with your physician about your options regarding joint replacement surgery. For more information call 214-575-BONE.

www.orthodoc.aaos.org/sportsmedicine



The question was answered by Sacheen Mehta, M.D., an orthopaedic surgeon and sports medicine specialist on the medical staff at Richardson Regional Medical Center and Medical Center of Plano.

For a consultation with Dr. Mehta to see if joint replacement is right for you please call (214) 575-2663
Ask about the new Minimally-Invasive Knee Replacement Surgery