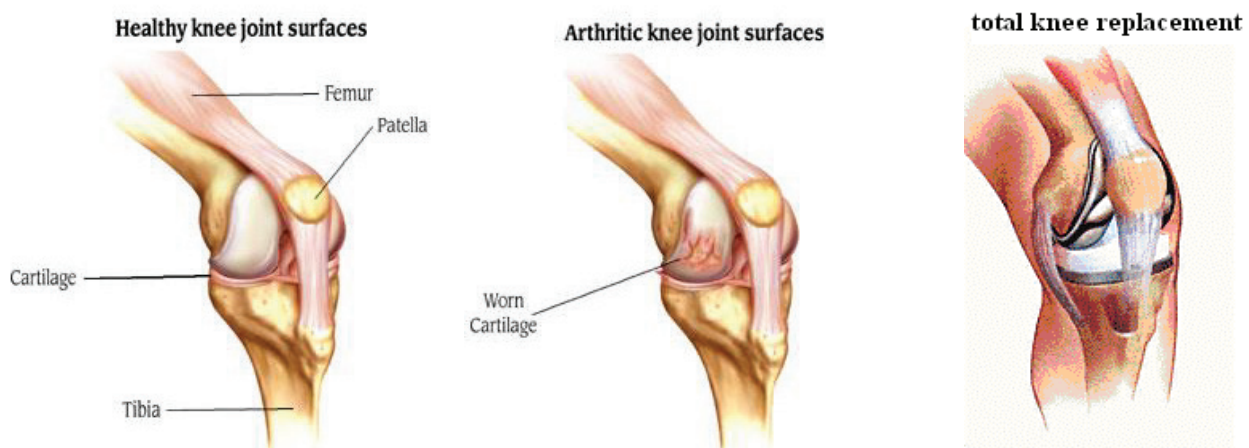


TOTAL KNEE REPLACEMENT

With age and also with rheumatoid arthritis the weight bearing surfaces of the knee joint become worn away. They are no longer smooth and free running and this leads to stiffness and pain. Eventually the joint wears away to such an extent that the bone of the femur grinds on the bone of the tibia. A total knee replacement replaces these surfaces with plastic and metal. The femoral replacement is a smooth metal component, which fits snugly over the end of the bone. The tibial replacement is in two parts, a metal base sitting on the bone and a plastic insert, which sits between the metal base on the tibial and femoral component. If necessary the patellar surface (under the knee cap) is replaced with a plastic button, which glides over the metal surface of the femoral replacement.

WHAT IS INVOLVED IN TOTAL KNEE REPLACEMENT

To be able to replace the surface of the knee joint a 20cm incision is made down the front of the knee and the joint opened. The bony overgrowth, which commonly occurs in arthritis of the knee, is trimmed away and the joint surfaces removed. This involves some shaping of the bone so that the joint replacement components sit firmly on the bone. In the replacements now being used the bone then grows into the roughened surfaces of the replacement, anchoring it down. In addition, bone cement is used to hold the components in place.



QUESTIONS COMMONLY ASKED

Q. Anaesthetic?

A. Either general or spinal anaesthesia – discuss with your Anaesthetist at the preadmission clinic.

Q. Duration of operation?

A. One knee: 1-2 hours, two knees: 2-3 hours.

Q. Length of stay in hospital?

A. 5-7 days.

Q. Do I need rehabilitation after my surgery?

A. Yes, this is an essential part of recovery. This can be as an inpatient or an outpatient. The rehabilitation is organised after your surgery by the hospital staff.

Q. Driving a car?

A. Avoid for 6 weeks after surgery.

Q. How long does it take for the swelling to go away?

A. It can take 3-6 months before the size of the knee returns to normal. The knee may also feel slightly warm for this period.

Q. How long will the new knee last?

A. New materials and techniques in the past 10-15 years make it difficult to forecast, current models have lasted between 10 and 20 years without problems.

Q. What is the prosthesis made of?

A. The metal component of the prosthesis is made from cobalt chromium and the lining from high density polyethylene.

Q. How long do I need off work?

A. This depends largely on the type of work you do. After the time in hospital you may need a few weeks to recover and settle down before returning to light duties. Work requiring a great deal of moving around should not be attempted for 6-8 weeks.

Q. When can I travel?

A. You can travel from the 6 week mark following review.

Q. Can I kneel following the surgery?

A. There are 3 main reasons why patients should avoid kneeling following total knee replacement surgery.

1: Following the surgery there is a scar down the knee and this can often be painful when kneeling on it.

2: Following the surgery, there is an area on the outside part of the knee which is usually numb. Kneeling on a numb patch of skin can often result in damage to the skin and potential risk of infection. This is why kneeling is best avoided, unless kneeling on a soft surface that is clean.

3: Following a total knee replacement, a full range of motion is usually not obtained, and it is therefore difficult to get down and get up from a kneeling position. Patients are allowed to kneel following the surgery if they can do it with care and put up with the above issues.

Q. Can I play sport following my total knee replacement?

A. Sporting activities following total knee replacement surgery do put increased loads through the total knee replacement. More vigorous sports that involve running and pivoting, obviously, apply increased loads than walking. Taking up sports following a total knee replacement that have not been performed for many years is usually not recommended. Resuming sports, following a total knee replacement, that have been performed in the days leading up to the total knee replacement surgery should be allowed, within reason. These sports should be discussed with A/Prof. Pinczewski to establish a reasonable time frame for them to occur. Returning to golf, doubles tennis, sailing, or lawn bowling usually can be managed after 8 weeks and an appropriate rehabilitation program has been completed.

Q. Do I need antibiotics before going to the dentist after a total knee replacement?

A. Antibiotic prophylaxis is not normally necessary before dental treatment unless advised by your dentist. Patients are strongly recommended to undergo a comprehensive dental examination (including radiographs) before undergoing joint replacement surgery. Postoperatively, early recognition and treatment of any infection is important to prevent seeding of an infection to the prosthesis.