



Knee Osteoarthritis: Is It Time to Think About Surgery?



Knee Osteoarthritis: Is It Time to Think About Surgery?

The pain and stiffness from knee osteoarthritis can make it hard for you to do your daily tasks. And it can keep you from doing the things you like to do. But you have options. You can have surgery to replace your knee. Or you can try treatments that don't involve surgery—things like exercise, medicines for pain, shots of medicine into the knee joint, physical therapy, or losing weight (if you need to).

No one choice is right for everyone. What you decide will depend on what matters most to you. Let's take a few minutes to explore your options and what you prefer.



Knee replacement surgery offers better pain relief. But it also has some risks.



Nonsurgical treatments have fewer risks. But they may not work as well to relieve pain.

Key Facts to Know

- **Knee arthritis symptoms may come and go.** They don't always get worse over time.
- **Nonsurgical treatments help many people feel better and do more, often for a long time.** But for people who have severe knee arthritis, they may not work as well as knee replacement surgery.
- **Knee replacement surgery usually works very well.** After surgery, most people have much less pain and can do more activities.
- **Knee replacement surgery is a major surgery.** Risks aren't common, but they can be serious. Recovery also takes work and time.
- **Most knee replacements last for at least 15 years.** Some people will need to have their knee replaced again.



Before you start...

Right now, what treatment are you leaning toward for your knee pain?

Select one:

- Knee replacement surgery
- Nonsurgical treatments
- I'm not sure

How far along are you with this decision?

Select one:

- Not yet thought about all the options
- Considering the different options
- Close to choosing an option

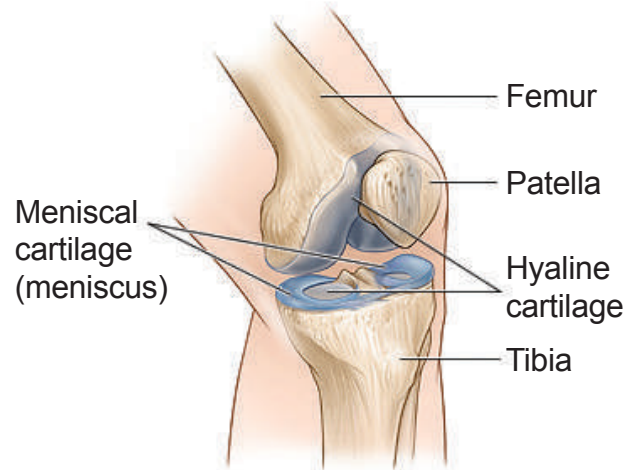


When you're done

This decision aid won't make your decision for you. But it will help you think about what matters to you and what questions you may have. It may also help you talk with your doctor or loved ones about which way you're leaning and why.

Knee Osteoarthritis

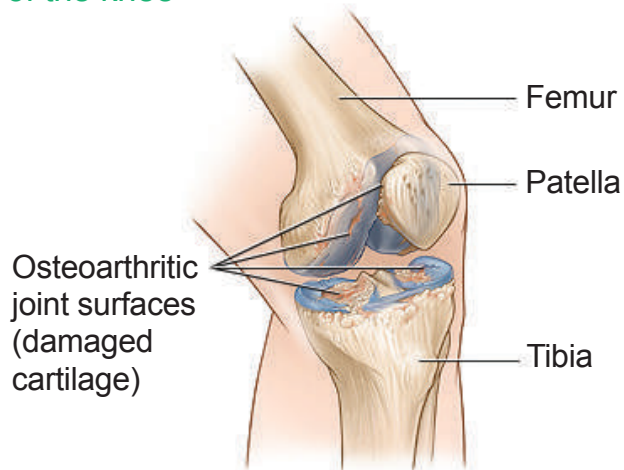
Normal knee joint



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Inside a normal knee joint, thick cushioning (cartilage) covers and protects the ends of your bones. This is called hyaline cartilage. Another type of cartilage, called meniscal cartilage or meniscus, acts like a shock absorber between the bones and helps keep the knee joint stable.

Osteoarthritis of the knee



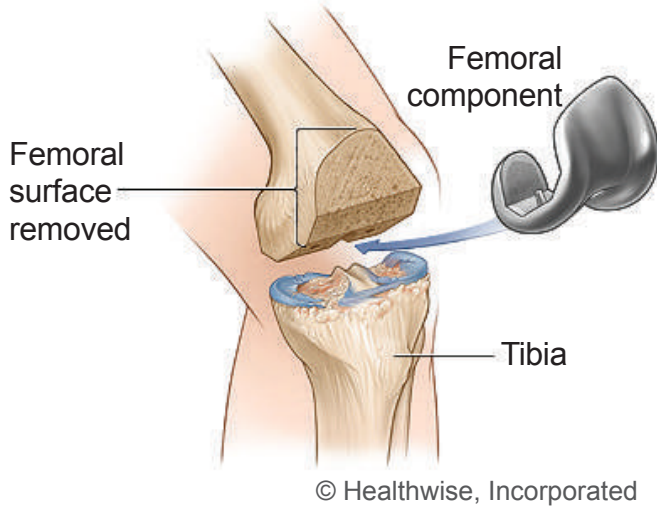
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In osteoarthritis, the cartilage that protects and cushions the knee joint breaks down over time. As the cartilage wears down, the bone surfaces rub against each other. This damages the tissue and bone, causing pain.



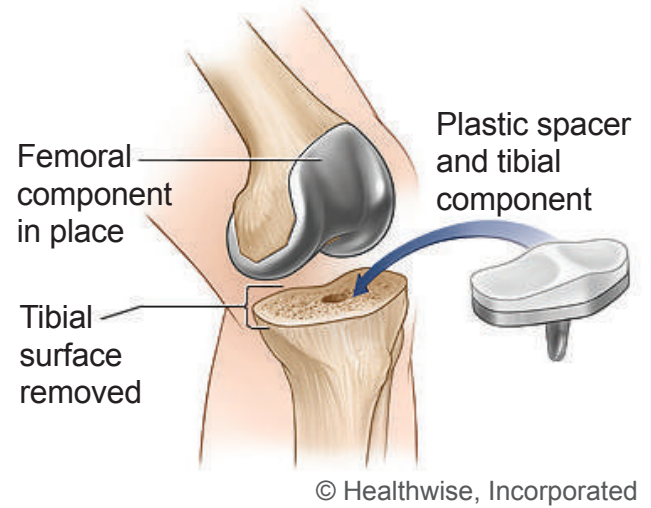
Knee Replacement Surgery

1. Femoral component is placed



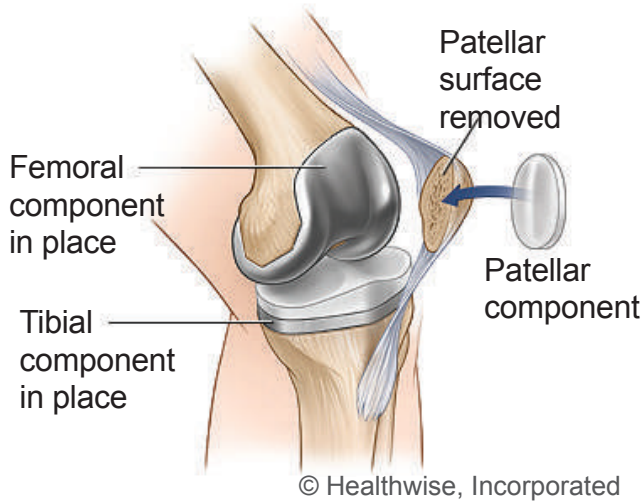
The doctor replaces the damaged part of your femur with a metal piece (femoral component).

2. Tibial component is placed



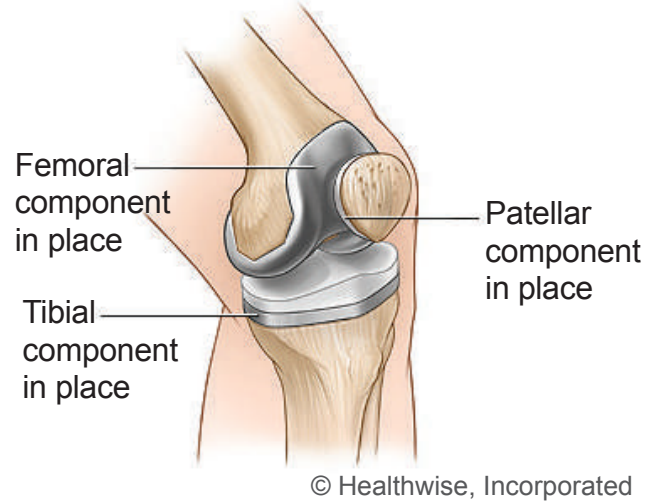
The doctor replaces the damaged part of your tibia with a metal piece and plastic surface (plastic spacer and tibial component).

3. Patellar component is placed

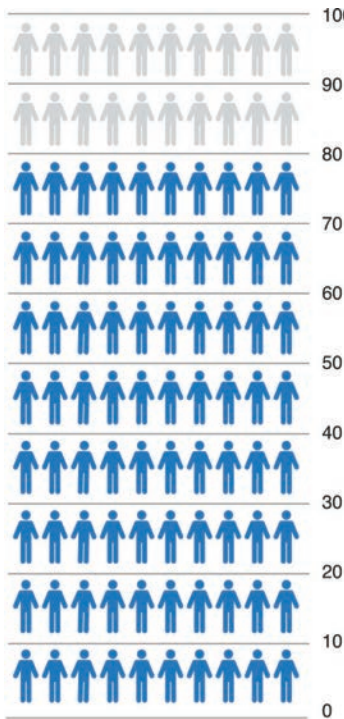


Part of the kneecap is replaced with plastic (patellar component).

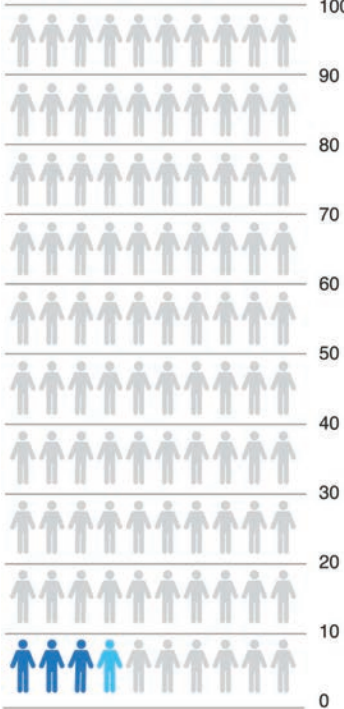
4. Knee replacement surgery is complete



Compare Your Options

	Knee Replacement Surgery	Nonsurgical Treatments
What's Involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major surgery. Short hospital stay. Physical therapy for several weeks, including exercises you can do at home. Most knee replacements last for at least 15 years. Out of 100 people, about 11 will need to have their knee replaced again. 	<p>Any or all of these:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exercise and weight loss. Physical therapy. Pain medicines (pills, skin creams). Shots of medicines into the knee joint. Acupuncture and massage. Dietary supplements. Knee braces, canes, crutches, and other walking aids.
Pain Relief	<p>Most people have much less pain after surgery. The pain relief lasts a long time.</p> <p>About 80 out of 100 people have less pain and can do more activities after surgery.</p> 	<p>These treatments work well for some people. But for people who have severe knee arthritis, they may not work as well as surgery.</p>



	Knee Replacement Surgery	Nonsurgical Treatments
<p>Risks</p>	<p>About 3 to 4 out of 100 people have a serious complication like a joint infection, a blood clot, or a heart attack within 3 months after surgery.</p> <p>If you are older or have other health problems, your risk may be higher.</p> 	<p>In general, these treatments have fewer risks than surgery. Some may have side effects.</p> <p>If you wait too long to have a knee replacement and have already lost much of your strength, you might have a harder time returning to your normal activities after the surgery.</p>
<p>Recovery</p>	<p>It usually takes people 2 to 3 months to get back to doing their usual activities. But it may take a little longer than that for some people.</p> <p>A full recovery may take 6 to 12 months.</p>	<p>In general, these treatments allow you to keep doing most of your usual activities. But your knee pain may limit how much you can do.</p>
<p>Cost</p>	<p>The cost of surgery varies. Check your insurance coverage.</p> <p>Also think about costs of help you may need during recovery.</p>	<p>May include costs of over-the-counter pills or creams, walking aids, or treatments your insurance doesn't cover.</p>



Check the Facts

Now that you've read the facts about each option, it's time to check what you've learned. Here are a few quick questions to help you find out. If you're not sure about the answers, check the "Compare Your Options" page again. Or you can make a note to ask your doctor for more information.

Which treatment is most likely to provide relief from knee pain caused by osteoarthritis?

- Surgery
- Nonsurgical treatments
- Both are about the same
- I'm not sure

If 100 people have knee replacement surgery, about how many will need to have the same knee replaced again in less than 15 years?

- More than half
- About half
- Less than half
- I'm not sure

If 100 people have knee replacement surgery, about how many will have less knee pain after the surgery?

- 20
- 40
- 60
- 80
- I'm not sure

Serious complications can happen after knee replacement surgery, including life-threatening blood clots, infections, heart attacks, and even death.

If 100 people have knee replacement surgery, about how many will have a serious complication within 3 months after surgery?

- 4
- 10
- 14
- 20
- I'm not sure

After knee replacement surgery, about how many months does it take most people to get back to doing their usual activities?

- Less than 2 months
- 2 to 6 months
- 7 to 12 months
- More than 12 months
- I'm not sure



Check your answers on page 11.

What Matters to You?

What you decide will depend on how you feel about the benefits and risks of each option. On a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 being not at all important and 10 being extremely important, please mark how important each reason is to you as you think about your decision.

How important is it to you to ...	Not at all important	Extremely important
Relieve your knee pain?	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
Not be limited in what you can do because of your knee pain?	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
Avoid having knee surgery?	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
Avoid taking pain medicine for a long time?	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
Avoid a treatment with a long recovery time?	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	

Use this space to list any other reasons that are important to you:



How Sure Do You Feel About Your Decision?

Do you feel sure about the best choice for you?	Yes	No
Do you know the benefits and risks of each option?	Yes	No
Are you clear about which benefits and risks matter most to you?	Yes	No
Do you have enough support and advice to make a choice?	Yes	No

Which way are you leaning?

At this time, what treatment are you leaning toward for your knee pain?

Select one:

- Knee replacement surgery
- Nonsurgical treatments
- I'm not sure

How far along are you with this decision?

Select one:

- Not yet thought about all the options
- Considering the different options
- Close to choosing an option



Check your answers



Which treatment is most likely to provide relief from knee pain caused by osteoarthritis?

ANSWER: *Surgery* is the correct answer.

Most people have much less pain after surgery. The pain relief lasts a long time.

If 100 people have knee replacement surgery, about how many will need to have the same knee replaced again in less than 15 years?

ANSWER: The answer is *Less than half*.

Most knee replacements last for at least 15 years. Out of 100 people, about 11 will need to have their knee replaced again.

If 100 people have knee replacement surgery, about how many will have less knee pain after the surgery?

ANSWER: The answer is *80*.

About 80 out of 100 people have less pain and can do more activities after surgery.

Serious complications can happen after knee replacement surgery, including life-threatening blood clots, infections, heart attacks, and even death.

If 100 people have knee replacement surgery, about how many will have a serious complication within 3 months after surgery?

ANSWER: The answer is *4*.

About 3 to 4 out of 100 people have a serious complication like a joint infection, a blood clot, or a heart attack within 3 months after surgery. If you are older or have other health problems, your risk may be higher.

After knee replacement surgery, about how many months does it take most people to get back to doing their usual activities?

ANSWER: The answer is *2 to 6 months*.

It usually takes people 2 to 3 months to get back to doing their usual activities. But it may take a little longer than that for some people. A full recovery may take 6 to 12 months.





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