

Are there complications?

As with any surgery, there is a risk of developing complications after knee replacement surgery. Although the chance is low, your orthopaedic surgeon will discuss all of the possible complications with you prior to surgery.

What about pain?

The pain you are currently experiencing in your knee will be gone after surgery; however, you will have surgical pain. Thanks to advances in medication technology, we are able to keep you relatively comfortable after surgery. Our goal is to get you back to the activities you enjoy as soon as possible.

How can I learn more?

To learn more about knee replacement surgery, we encourage you to attend one of our free Joint Pain Seminars. The one-hour seminars include information about the causes of pain and the latest treatments — including suggested medications, nutrition and exercise.

In addition, prior to your knee replacement surgery, we will ask you to attend a preoperative education class. For more information about the seminars or the preoperative education class, call (515) 643-BONE, e-mail jointcamp@mercydesmoines.org or visit www.mercydesmoines.org/ortho.

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Knee Replacement

Mercy Center for Joint Replacement

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What is knee replacement?

Knee replacement, also known as total knee replacement or knee arthroplasty, is a surgical procedure that is performed to remove worn, diseased or damaged bone and cartilage and replace it with an artificial joint, or prosthesis, that is made of metal and plastic. Undergoing knee replacement surgery can help relieve pain and allows patients to return to normal everyday activities. For those who have become bow-legged or knock-kneed over the years, it can also straighten the legs into a more natural position.

Arthritic knee



Knee replacement



Who should have knee replacement surgery?

Knee replacement surgery may be recommended after careful diagnosis of your joint problem. Knee replacement candidates often experience severe pain that limits everyday activities—such as walking, going up and down stairs and getting into and out of chairs. Other reasons to consider surgery may include moderate or severe knee pain while resting, swelling of the knee that does not improve with rest or medication, knees that bow in or out or the inability to bend and straighten the knee.

Is there an alternative to replacement?

More conservative treatments—including medications, injections, physical therapy or other types of surgery—may be discussed and considered depending on your joint problem.

How long is the hospital stay after surgery?

After knee replacement surgery, patients participate in Joint Camp, a program of the Mercy Center for Joint Replacement offered at Mercy's Central Campus downtown, as well as at the Mercy West Lakes Campus. Joint Camp is intended to help hip and knee replacement patients achieve successful recovery after joint replacement surgery. Through pre-operative education and group exercise, patients encourage each other to work harder during the recovery and rehabilitation process. Patients should expect to be in the hospital no more than two to three days.

How long is the recovery process?

At Joint Camp, joint replacement patients are up and able to walk the first day after surgery. After patients are discharged, they participate in six weeks of aggressive physical therapy to establish full range of motion in the knee joint. Typically, patients need the assistance of crutches or a walker during this time, followed by a cane for another three to six weeks. Patients are able to drive within four to six weeks and are able to participate in more strenuous activities—such as golf—in six to 12 weeks.

Are there restrictions after surgery?

There are certain activities that should be avoided after knee replacement surgery. Orthopaedic surgeons advise patients against participating in high impact activities—such as jogging, singles tennis, skiing, repetitive lifting exceeding 50 pounds and contact sports. Instead, low-impact activities—like recreational walking and biking, swimming, golf and ballroom dancing—are encouraged and help patients remain active after surgery.