

## **INFORMATION SHEET: TOTAL KNEE REPLACEMENT**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In knee replacement surgery, the surgeon resurfaces the damaged ends of the bones of the knee joint with artificial parts. The artificial joint relieves pain and should improve function of the knee.



### **INDICATIONS AND GOALS FOR SURGERY**

Most patients who consider knee replacement surgery have severe arthritis of the knee or another condition that has led to the destruction of the cartilage covering the ends of the bones that make up the knee. When the patient's knee condition causes daily, disabling pain and the patient is unable to achieve pain relief with conservative (non-surgical) measures, then knee replacement may be an option.

The primary goal of knee replacement surgery is to reduce knee pain while improving function and reducing limp.

### **DESCRIPTION OF THE SURGICAL PROCEDURE**

During knee replacement surgery, the Orthopaedic surgeon will make an incision near the knee to expose the knee. Damaged cartilage and bone is then removed from the surfaces of the femur (thigh bone), tibia (shin bone) and/or patella (knee cap) and new artificial surfaces are fixed in place. The "new" knee will be put in place and tested for motion and stability. All tissue that was cut for surgery will be repaired.

### **REHABILITATION**

Rehabilitation will begin soon after surgery. After discharge, the patient will begin outpatient physical therapy and a home exercise program focused on motion and strength of the knee. The patient's motivation and willingness to participate in the rehabilitation program are critical in determining final strength, range of motion and walking pattern.

### **POTENTIAL BENEFITS**

The primary benefit of total knee replacement surgery is to reduce pain in the knee. As the rehabilitation progresses, the patient should also note an improvement in motion of the knee and walking pattern.

### **POTENTIAL RISKS**

Total knee replacement surgery is considered a major surgical procedure. Serious medical risks associated with the surgery may include, and are not limited to, problems with anesthesia, heart attack, heart beat irregularities, and stroke. In very rare situations, a person may die from

complications related to surgery. Other risks related to the orthopedic procedure include, but are not limited to: blood clots, pulmonary embolism, infection, instability (the knee “giving out”), knee stiffness, differences in leg lengths or rotation of the leg, fracture of bones involved with the procedures, hematoma (blood accumulation in the hip) which may require surgical drainage, nerve injury, blood vessel injury, and numbness and scarring around the surgical incision. Blood loss can occur during or after the surgery which may require transfusions. The implants may need to be removed or replaced if they become loose, wear out, or if there is evidence of infection. Total knee replacement may not alleviate knee pain or restore the range of motion of the knee.

### **ACHIEVING THE GOALS OF SURGERY**

Upon full recovery, most patients have no pain or significantly less pain. Most patients are able to walk more smoothly, have more endurance with their new knee, and are able to function more normally. A small percentage of patients have persistent discomfort, stiffness, and/or limp after surgery.

### **ALTERNATIVES TO SURGERY**

Conservative (non-surgical) measures may help control knee pain. These include the use of anti-inflammatory and/or pain medications, weight loss, use of a cane or other assistive devices, a low stress exercise program, and reduction in heavy and/or pounding activities. In selected cases, other surgical options may exist such as cutting the bones about the knee to change leg alignment or resurfacing only part of the knee with a partial knee replacement. Another alternative to knee replacement surgery would be to seek no treatment at all.

### **CONSEQUENCES OF DECLINING CARE**

Arthritis itself is not considered a life threatening illness. If the patient elects not to undergo treatment, then it is likely that knee pain will continue. The patient’s pain, deformity and disability may increase with time. If left unattended, arthritis may progress enough that surgery in the future may be very difficult and provide less predictable results.

### **MEMBERS OF THE SURGICAL TEAM**

The Orthopedic surgeon will require the assistance of a team of experts during surgery. Physician assistants, surgical assistance, and surgical technicians will be performing important tasks related to surgery. These activities are in accordance with the hospital’s policies.\

### **LONG TERM CONCERNS**

Long term complications are possible after partial knee replacement. Late loosening, wear, infection or progressive bone loss may occur and may require re-operation. Close follow-up is necessary to monitor for changes around the joint replacement which could threaten the strength of the bone near the joint replacement. The risk of problems related to wearing of the artificial joint surfaces increases over time. Regular follow-up (every two years) becomes more important as the joint replacement becomes older. The risk of problems related to wearing of the artificial joint surfaces increases over time.