

# Knee Replacement Surgery: A Women's Health Issue

## Delaying Treatment Can Harm Women's Long-term Mobility And Quality Of Life

(NAPSA)—Osteoarthritis, also known as degenerative joint disease, affects more than 20 million Americans—and women are suffering from greater osteoarthritis-related disability than men. Yet the topic of knee replacement surgery is rarely raised when women's health issues are discussed, even though osteoarthritis plays a significant role in driving the need for joint replacements.

Increased awareness of this issue is critical, since women today often wait too long to undergo knee replacement. By delaying the surgery, women with chronic, disabling knee pain forfeit the benefits of pain reduction, improved mobility and increased quality of life that can be offered by the procedure.

According to a 2000 study in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, women are three times more likely than men to suffer from continuous knee pain and three times less likely than men to undergo needed knee replacement surgery. They also have worse joint function when they do turn to surgery, which suggests that they wait longer before getting treatment.

Why are women waiting? Women are delaying surgery for a number of social and psychological reasons, from worries about caring for their families during recovery to myths about the surgery itself. Women may sometimes avoid knee replacement because of the conventional wisdom that surgery is only recommended when discomfort turns

into disability that the patient can't tolerate. Yet a 1999 study in *Arthritis & Rheumatism* found that those who get early treatment tend to have less postoperative pain and better knee function after surgery.

Women may also think it's better to delay surgery until they're older because they believe that knee implants don't last. The reality is that the unique rotating platform knee replacements are designed to help improve wear reduction compared to older knee replacement technologies. A recent follow-up of a study in *The Journal of Bone & Joint Surgery* showed that even after 15 years, more than 97 percent of the rotating platform knees in the study are still performing.

### Is It Time To Talk To Your Doctor About Knee Replacement?

To get perspective on your pain, it's important to understand how it affects your ability to work, play—even to perform daily tasks. If you answer "yes" to any of the questions below, it might be time to talk to your doctor about knee replacement surgery.

- Does your knee hurt one or more days per week?
- Does the pain interfere with your sleep?
- Is it painful for you to walk more than a block?
- Are pain medications no longer working?
- Is knee pain limiting your participation in activities?
- Has inactivity from knee pain caused you to gain weight?
- Can you limit activities for a few months to recover from surgery?
- Are you willing to commit to work hard during rehabilitation for a successful recovery?

For more information about knee replacement, visit [www.kneereplacement.com](http://www.kneereplacement.com).



"Many women suffer needlessly and give up the activities they enjoy," says Wayne M. Goldstein, M.D., Clinical Professor of Orthopaedics at the University of Illinois at Chicago, and founder and president of the Illinois Bone & Joint Institute. "New innovations in orthopaedic technology and knee replacement surgery can restore their ability to enjoy an active life."

Dr. Goldstein adds, "Many women think that chronic pain is just part of getting older. But knee pain can often be healed. I encourage anyone who suffers from severe, debilitating knee pain to talk to their surgeon about their treatment options."

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