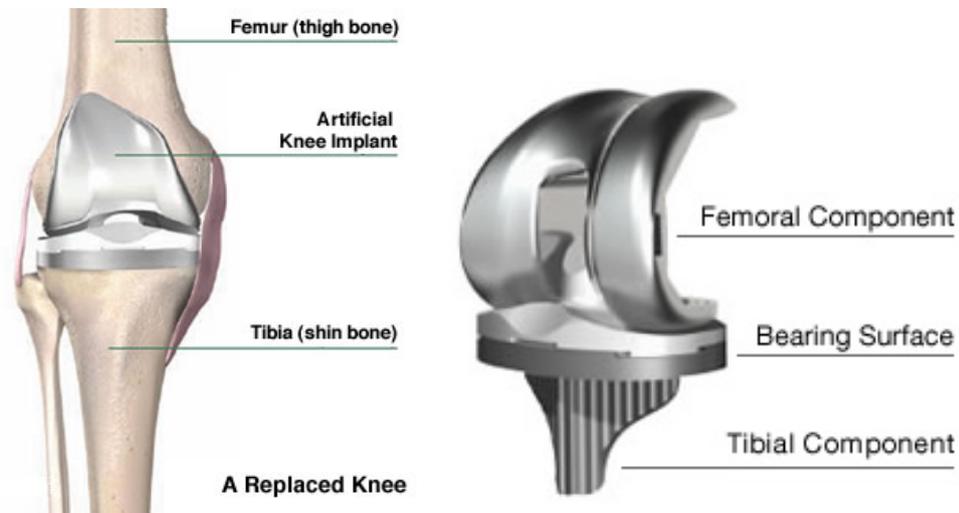


Knee Replacement Surgery – Dr Sarah Watts



Preadmission

Prior to surgery, you may need some pre-operative investigations. Specific investigations include blood tests, and electrocardiograph (ECG) or a chest x-ray. You may be asked to attend a pre-admission appointment with the anaesthetist. If your knee x-rays more than three months old, then new x-rays may be required. You will need to stop taking some medications prior to surgery. These are usually anticoagulant medications, and certain medications for arthritis. It is important that you notify your doctor prior to surgery if you take medications. If you have an artificial heart valve or other implant, you should also notify your doctor prior to surgery.

Admission

Admission is usually on the day of surgery. On some occasions you may be admitted earlier for medical reasons. Do not shave your legs in the 48 hours prior to surgery. Your leg will be surgically clipped, as needed, when you arrive at the hospital.

Anaesthesia

Knee replacement surgery can be performed using a number of different types of anaesthesia. Your anaesthetist will choose the safest anaesthetic for your medical circumstances. You may be offered a spinal anaesthetic or a general anaesthetic.

After surgery

Your anaesthetist will provide adequate measures for pain control in the ward post-operatively. You may have tablets, injections, a button to press, or other kinds of analgesic infusion. The doctor will do their best to make you as comfortable as possible, as safely as possible, but most patients will have some pain after the operation.

Physiotherapy will commence on the first day after surgery. It is usually safe to walk on your knee as soon as you are well enough. You will usually get out of bed on the first day after surgery. The physio will assist you, and you will likely need a mobility device, usually a frame or crutches. Your physiotherapist will guide you through the various stages of rehabilitation.

Most people will stay in hospital between four and six nights. You will not be discharged until you are safe to go home. This means you are comfortable and safely mobilising by yourself. A follow-up appointment is usually made between two and three weeks after your operation.

Your wound should be kept clean, dry and out of the shower/bath post surgery. The stitches are usually dissolvable and under the skin. Keep the dressing on until your doctor checks the wound, and tells you it is ok to immerse it in water again.

Longer term recovery

Most patients feel pain and discomfort for the first few weeks at home, after a total knee replacement. It is normal to take pain relief medication over this period. A short supply of medication will be provided to you at hospital discharge.

You will likely be given some anticoagulation tablets to take for the first few weeks, one tablet per day. This is just for the first few weeks. Please follow the doctor's instructions, and take this tablet (Xarelto) to try to reduce the chance of thrombosis.

Icing the knee for 20 to 30 minutes at a time for the first few weeks will help reduce pain and swelling. You will notice that your knee is warm and swollen after surgery. This usually settles by three months, although the swelling may persist longer. You'll also notice that the skin on the outside of the incision may be numb. This is normal. The numbness usually decreases over time, but it may not disappear completely.

You may need some help around the house for the first six weeks. Tasks that can be difficult include cooking laundry and cleaning activities. Some people like to make preparations before surgery for recovery time. This includes organising helpers and family, or pre-preparing freezer meals. It is usually recommended that you do not drive for six weeks after your knee replacement surgery.

By six weeks you will be mostly better and you will have resumed normal walking and light leisure and most domestic activities.

Most patients will have physiotherapy post surgery, usually once a week. You may require crutches a walking stick or a walker for up to 6 weeks depending on your recovery.

You should take at least six weeks off work depending on your occupation. This should be discussed with your doctor, and depends on the physicality of your occupation. For example tradespeople may need more time off (12 weeks or more), while office workers may only require six weeks.

You should avoid high impact energetic activities in the first six weeks. Over time you can start to increase your walking and start more energetic activities such as cycling and swimming.

It usually takes up to 3 months we return to most daily activities and six months to recover full strength and endurance after knee replacement surgery.