

ASK THE EXPERTS [D MEDICAL DIRECTORY: DALLAS EDITION]

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JOINT REPLACEMENT EXPERT

Q: What is joint replacement surgery?

A: Joint replacement surgery involves replacing diseased, worn-out joints with artificial, man-made replacements. This is done by highly trained surgeons who remove the diseased, worn-out cartilage and contour the bone to accept the new prosthesis. These are very technical procedures that require knowledge of biomechanics, materials science, anatomy, and medicine. These procedures alleviate pain and allow patients to resume a normal, active lifestyle.

Q: How do I know if I need joint replacement surgery?

A: Not everyone with hip and knee problems needs joint replacement surgery. In fact, most people with joint pain do not require surgery. Whenever possible, we try to first employ conservative treatment modalities. In many cases, we can treat the source of pain with braces, orthotics, anti-inflammatory medications, physical therapy, modification of certain activities, injectables (including synovial replacement to lubricate the knee), and exercise. Any of these treatments, or a combination, can be used to help alleviate symptoms. If none of these methods work and the pain persists, we may recommend joint replacement surgery. This surgery is usually performed when a patient's pain is unrelenting and interferes with normal daily activities despite these conservative measures. Whenever possible, surgery is the last treatment option.

Q: How does traditional joint replacement differ from patient-specific joint replacement?

A: In the traditional surgery, the surgeon opens the knee and goes through a series of alignment steps that allows for preparation of the bone to fit the prosthesis with regard to its final alignment. This allows potential for error. The surgeons at All-Star Orthopaedics use a patient-specific approach to this problem. They initially obtain an MRI of the patient's knee. The data from this MRI is integrated via computer to build an exact model

of the patient's knee as well as cutting guides that assist in the contouring of the patient's bone. This allows for very accurate, precise, three-dimensional alignment of the patient's knee replacement. This helps lower risk and improve patient outcomes. In addition, this often leads to less tissue damage, less pain, bleeding, and swelling as well as better motion and reduced recovery time. By specifically aligning the prosthesis to fit the individual patient, the patient is theoretically provided with a biochemically superior knee. Optimal alignment leads to a joint that functions efficiently and lasts longer.

Q: What is the typical recovery time for joint replacement surgery?

A: Using these patient specific techniques, today's joint replacement surgery patients should be in the hospital only a few days. A physical therapist will need to visit the patient's home for the first few weeks, and the patient should be pain-free and back to normal activities within four to six weeks.

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At All-Star Orthopaedics, orthopaedic surgeons, and staff are committed to helping you improve these conditions and get back to life. All-Star offers a variety of specialty treatments designed to improve both common and uncommon orthopaedic afflictions.

Dr. Schott, a graduate of John Hopkins School of Medicine, is board certified by the American Board of Orthopaedic Surgery. He specializes in joint replacement, general orthopaedics, and sports medicine at All-Star Orthopaedics. He was a founding member of the practice. Dr. Schott has served as a clinical instructor of orthopaedic surgery. He has received academic honors in orthopaedic surgery and has conducted research at medical institutions across the world.