

# Knee Osteoarthritis: Is It Time to Think About Surgery?

The pain and stiffness from knee osteoarthritis can make it hard for you to do your daily tasks. And it can keep you from doing the things you like to do. But you have options. You can have surgery to replace your knee. Or you can try treatments that don't involve surgery—things like exercise, medicines for pain, steroid shots into the knee joint, physical therapy, or losing weight (if you need to).

**Only you know which choice is right for you.** What you decide will depend on what matters most to you. Let's take a few minutes to explore your options and what you prefer.



Knee replacement surgery offers better pain relief. But it also has some risks.



Nonsurgical treatments have fewer risks. But they may not work as well to relieve pain.

## We're Curious

**Right now, what treatment are you leaning toward for your knee pain?**

- Knee replacement surgery
- Nonsurgical treatments
- I'm not sure

**How far along are you with this decision?**

- Not yet thought about all the options
- Considering the different options
- Close to choosing an option



## Key Facts to Know

- **Knee arthritis symptoms may come and go.** They don't always get worse over time.
- **Nonsurgical treatments help many people feel better and do more, often for a long time.** But for people who have severe knee arthritis, they may not work as well as knee replacement surgery.
- **Knee replacement surgery usually works very well.** After surgery, most people have much less pain and can do more activities.
- **Knee replacement surgery is a major surgery.** Risks aren't common, but they can be serious. Recovery also takes work and time.
- **Most knee replacements last for about 20 years.** For some people, it makes sense to delay surgery for as long as they can to reduce the chance of needing to replace the joint again later. On the other hand, if you wait too long to have surgery, you might have a harder time with strength and range of motion after surgery.



# Compare Your Options

## Knee Replacement Surgery

## Nonsurgical Treatments



### What's involved

- Major surgery.
- Possibility of a short hospital stay.
- Physical therapy for several weeks, including exercises you can do at home.
- Most knee replacements (about 90 out of 100) last for about 20 years. Out of 100 people who have the surgery, about 10 may need to have their knee replaced again within 20 years. Knee replacements don't last as long in men and in people who are young, active, or overweight.

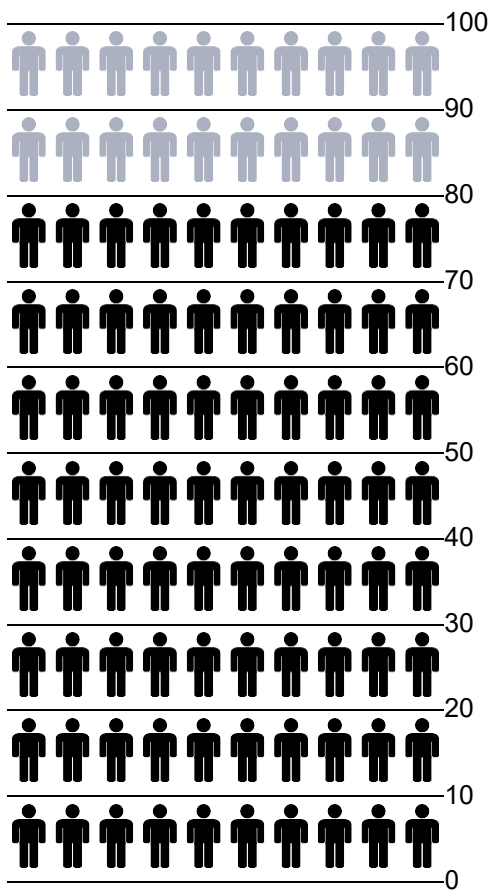
Any or all of these:

- Exercise and weight loss.
- Physical therapy.
- Pain medicines (pills, skin creams).
- Steroid shots into the knee joint.
- Acupuncture and massage.
- Dietary supplements.
- Knee braces, canes, and other walking aids.



## Pain relief

- Surgery works well for most people. Six months after knee replacement, about 80 out of 100 people have less pain and can do more activities than they could before the surgery.

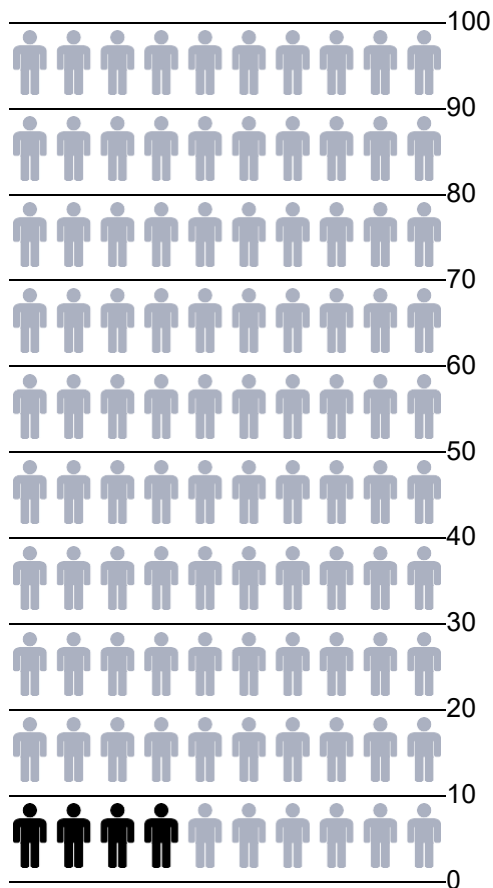


- Nonsurgical treatments work well for some people. For example:
  - Leg and knee exercises can reduce pain and stiffness. And being active can make it easier to move around.
  - If you're overweight, losing even a few pounds can reduce your knee pain.
  - Steroid shots may give quick pain relief for a few weeks.
- But for severe knee arthritis, nonsurgical treatments may not work as well as surgery.



## Risks

- About 4 out of 100 people have a serious complication like a joint infection, a blood clot, or a heart attack within 3 months after surgery.



- If you are older or have other health problems, your risk may be higher.

- In general, these treatments have fewer risks than surgery. Some may have side effects. For example, any medicine used to treat pain can have side effects.

- It usually takes people about 4 to 16 weeks to get back to doing most of their usual activities. But it may take a little longer than that for some people.
- It may take up to a year to make a full recovery and reach your maximum knee strength and range of motion.
- In general, these treatments allow you to keep doing most of your usual activities. But your knee pain may limit how much you can do.



## Cost

- The cost of surgery varies. Check your insurance coverage.
- Also think about costs of help you may need during recovery.
- This may include the costs of over-the-counter pills or creams, walking aids, or treatments that your insurance doesn't cover.



# Check the Facts

Now that you've read the facts about each option, let's see what you've learned. We've got a few quick questions to find out. If you're not sure about the answers, check the Compare page again. Or you can make a note to ask your doctor for more information.

**Which treatment is most likely to provide relief from severe knee pain caused by osteoarthritis?**

- Surgery
- Nonsurgical treatments
- Both are about the same
- I'm not sure

**If 100 people have knee replacement surgery, about how many will need to have the same knee replaced again in less than 20 years?**

- More than half
- About half
- Less than half
- I'm not sure

**Take 100 people who have knee replacement surgery. Six months later, about how many will have less knee pain than they had before the surgery?**

- 20
- 40
- 60
- 80
- I'm not sure

**Serious complications can happen after knee replacement surgery, including life-threatening blood clots, infections, heart attacks, and even death. If 100 people have knee replacement surgery, about how many will have a serious complication within 3 months after surgery?**

- 4
- 10
- 14
- 20
- I'm not sure

**After knee replacement surgery, about how many months does it take most people to get back to doing their usual activities?**

- Less than 2 months
- 2 to 6 months
- 7 to 12 months
- More than 12 months
- I'm not sure





### Avoid having knee surgery?

Not at all important

Extremely important

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### Avoid a treatment with a long recovery time?

Not at all important

Extremely important

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## Your Notes

Questions, concerns, or notes:

## Which Way Are You Leaning?

**At this time, what treatment are you leaning toward for your knee pain?**

- Knee replacement surgery
- Nonsurgical treatments
- I'm not sure

**How far along are you with this decision?**

- Not yet thought about all the options
- Considering the different options
- Close to choosing an option

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## Credits and References

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