

## Is Hip or Knee Replacement Surgery Right for Me?

It is important to try nonoperative treatments before considering joint replacement surgery. These include such things as weight loss (if you have extra weight), exercise and physical therapy, walking aids such as a cane or a brace, Tylenol, anti-inflammatory medications such as Advil, Aleve, or Celebrex, and joint injections (for knees). If you have tried these things but your hip or knee pain and stiffness continues to interfere with your life and prevents you from doing important things, then you may want to consider joint replacement surgery.

Hip and knee replacement surgery involves making an incision over the joint, removing the worn-out cartilage and replacing it with metal and plastic. Most (but not all) patients are satisfied with the results of surgery because their pain and function usually improve. However, joint replacement surgery is painful, and it requires a lot of work to get ready for the surgery and to recover afterwards so that you can have the most benefit. There are also some possible complications associated with surgery. These include things such as infection which can require further operations and antibiotics, damage to arteries or nerves which can leave a person with some numbness or weakness in the foot, dislocation of the joint which can require further surgeries to correct, blood clots forming in the calf muscles which can break off and travel to the lungs and cause breathing problems, the need for blood transfusion, heart attack or stroke.

The decision for surgery is up to you. When you feel that the potential benefits of improved pain and function outweigh both the effort required to recover and the possible complications then that's the time to have surgery.