

Orthopaedic Connection

"Doctor, Do You Recommend a Knee Replacement?"

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Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

As an Orthopaedic Surgeon I get asked this question a lot as you can imagine. Then the question often comes, "If it were your knee what would you do?"

The reply has to be individualized. I haven't had a knee replacement nor do I need one so far. I'll know if I do when I can't run to Millenium Force Coaster each morning when we are at Cedar Point.

Making a decision to have a total knee replacement is a huge decision, a big bridge to cross. If conservative, non surgical treatment has not worked and symptoms are severe enough, the patient really has no other choice except to put up with it.

I did a Public Television program recently called **Your Health Matters** about this very subject. My patient whom we interviewed concluded that she had so much pain and her function had deteriorated go greatly she had no other choice. Fortunately she has done well and she feels I "have given her life back".

I have no problem advising my patients what to do, but have always been careful not to be like a salesman for surgery.

Relieving the symptoms of knee arthritis and improving the function for patients are the same as for any of our patients. I close each article by saying, Our goal is simple - To help people return to more pain free, functional lives.

Now I don't want you to think that doing the surgery is simple! It is highly technical and can be extremely difficult in some patients who have extremely bad knees.

Key point - an end stage, severe arthritic knee, when replaced, never turns out as well as someone who has arthritis bad enough for a replacement, but it wasn't stiff and bowed, etc. So while the knee replacement can always be done, *the outcome can be compromised by waiting too long.*

Organized "Joint Camp" programs are making the process of going through knee replacement much easier for the patient and family.

I try to explain everything I can to educate the person about total knee replacement. I refer them to good articles about knee replacement on the office teaching website www.orthopodsurgeon.com. "The best informed patient is the most satisfied patient."

An important part of my job is not only to know whether a patient needs a total knee replacement, but what is the best kind for that person. We can get into specifics next week.

Please keep up with the course. *I want my readers to be as smart as a tree full of owls to coin an old phrase.*

Good health. Good life. All the best to you.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush