

Orthopaedic Connection

Does Knee Trouble Always Need Surgery?

By Thomas J. Haverbush, M.D.
Orthopaedic Surgeon

Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

I spend a lot of time talking to you about specific areas and that is by design. I'm going to try to cover topics thoroughly so you will have more than a superficial knowledge.

On the other hand I don't want to get so technical that your eyes glass over and I lose you. It would be wonderful if all of you could get in the habit of coming back each week for your class. Over time you will practically have a Masters Degree in musculoskeletal care and treatment! You will be really smart and I will be happy.

Sometimes patients have told me they avoided coming to see a doctor for their knee problem. They say surgery seems to be suggested for most problems nowadays and they weren't sure the knee was bad enough for surgery. So they avoided coming in. I find that sad. Unfortunately at this time it is often true. Advances in technology have seemed to make surgery the first and only answer. The patient gets no choice.

If you get no choices you went to the wrong place.

I was trained to consider all options, explain these to the patient and give him or her choices.

The knee is a perfect example.

As in all cases, treatment needs to be based on a careful history and examination as well as plain x-rays and sometimes special x-ray procedures.

I don't plan to go into all the reasons why knees hurt, but want to make you aware that there are many types of non surgical treatment. The treatment of course depends on the diagnosis I make. In this first class on knees I don't want to get into all the reasons knees hurt, but rather make you aware that there may be several types of treatment other than surgery. See, you are feeling better already. How refreshing, a surgeon (me) who is willing to discuss treatment other than surgery! Just because I have a hammer (surgery), I don't need to consider every knee I see as a nail.

Weight Loss

I can hear you groaning. It has been shown very often that losing as little as 10 pounds can reduce stress on the knee enough to decrease pain greatly. I know that for most of us losing ten pounds isn't easy, but it certainly is easier than having surgery, using a cane, crutches or walker, going to Physical Therapy etc.

Medication

Tylenol or Advil (Motrin) are always good choices on a temporary basis to see if the knee problem will subside. If you can take it, Advil is better because it is for pain as well as inflammation.

Heat, Ice, Wrap

It's not very high tech, but it works. Application of heat to the knee for about fifteen minutes followed by ice for fifteen minutes is a very effective treatment therapists use a lot. And there is always BenGay, Theragesic or similar preparation to supplement heat and ice. You could obtain a simple pull on or wrap around knee sleeve to try.

We are just getting started. Out of time for now so please plan to come back next week as I continue with the knee.

Gratiot County Herald Archive and Office Website

www.orthopodsurgeon.com is a great source of musculoskeletal information that you can use. In addition it is your entry to the Gratiot County Herald Archive of all articles I have written for GCH Orthopaedic Connection. They are all listed, most recent all the way back to the first. A couple of mouse clicks and the whole article appears!

The articles and website cover everything I treat in the office and hospital. Check it out.

Our goal is simple - To help people return to more pain free, functional lives. I specialize in you.

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

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush