

Orthopaedic Connection

Knee Pain: How I Treat It.

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Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

There are many causes for knee pain that I see in the office. It goes from muscle pain, ligament strain or overuse all the way to severe arthritis.

Correct Diagnosis

As I have told you many times in other articles, proper treatment can only be done when the diagnosis is correct. Since there are many causes I have to unravel the mystery so to speak. Knee pain can be very easy or very hard to diagnose.

- Detailed history
- Careful exam of knee (but hip, ankle and sometimes back too!)
- Plain x-rays which are done standing
- Maybe other special imaging studies if I need them. Often I don't.

Age Related

To a large extent what I do for treatment is determined by the person's age. I will focus on treatment of knee pain in patients over 40 for today's discussion.

Except for specific injuries that can damage the knee, most patients over 40 tell me that the pain "just came on several months ago". It's hard for most people to give a specific cause.

Changes in the knee's joint surface are most often the cause. The previously very slippery joint surface has begun to erode. Chondromalacia to put a medical word on it. It is an early stage of arthritis.

Direction of Treatment

After the accurate diagnosis of the knee pain has been made several options of treatment are considered.

- If no treatment has occurred so far I would in most cases suggest Advil or similar anti-inflammatory medication.
- Tylenol helps pain but not inflammation
- I often prescribe Celebrex if a prescription arthritis medication is needed.
- Sometimes Theragesic or Ben Gay will help.

Injections

- I use Celestone or Kenalog if I feel a cortisone preparation will help.
- If I am dealing with a somewhat more advanced arthritis change I might use the Supartz pain relieving lubrication series in 5 injections.

Exercise

Strengthening the thigh muscles above the knee can be very helpful in decreasing stress on the knee and relieving pain. Proper instruction for doing this is needed.

Surgery

I have very few patients coming to the office or Clinic insisting on surgery for their knee pain. I realize this and try other options first.

If it does begin to appear surgery is needed, there are often several choices.

In speaking to patients and families about this I like to present "the menu" so to speak. Everyone appreciates being informed about their choices. I take the time needed to do this for each patient.

I have a lot to say about the several types of surgery for the knee. We are out of time this week, but next time I will cover thoroughly what each type of surgery can do. Please come back to learn more about treatment of knee pain.

Gratiot County Herald Archive and Office Website

I hope what you have read has raised questions. No problem!

Please log onto www.orthopodsurgeon.com. It has a huge amount of musculoskeletal information in the Website and the Archive of all previous GCH articles.

Check it out and be amazed what you can learn.

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

Dr. Haverbush