

The Knee

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

In case you are wondering why there are a lot of articles about the knee, the answer is that knee problems are the most common thing we see in the office. It's amazing how many people have trouble with their knees these days.

The Cane

One of the most ancient devices known to man is still a valuable aid in reducing stress on an arthritic knee. Canes have been used for thousands of years, found in caves etc. A primitive, but still a valuable tool.

Increased medial (or inside) knee loading is connected with progression of arthritis. A cane used in the opposite hand can slow the progress of the arthritis. If only we could get more patients with knee arthritis to use one!

Shoes

Research has shown that if the foot and ankle are otherwise normal, walking barefoot puts the least strain on the arthritic knee. We of course are not recommending that patients not wear shoes! It's not very practical and besides people who are older who do not wear shoes in the house, slip and fall a lot more often than those who wear good supporting shoes.

We can't make a general recommendation about the best type of shoes to wear. However, a good supporting walking shoe or an athletic shoe with a wide heel are a safe choice.

Shoe Wedges

Wearing lateral wedge insoles can often benefit patients with medial (inner) compartment arthritis. It works in patients who have mild to moderate knee arthritis. It won't work if the arthritis is severe or if the patient is knock kneed. It also doesn't work if there are associated foot, ankle, hip or back problems. If you are going to try to wear lateral wedge insoles do it right. Go to a good shoe store that has a person skilled in fitting orthotics and insoles who can help you get what is correct for you.

Activity and Knee Arthritis

I hope to dispel an excuse for not getting off the couch! Exercise walking does not make older people (even if over weight) more likely to develop knee arthritis. Physical activity can be done safely without concerns that persons will develop knee osteoarthritis as a consequence.

If a person already has documented arthritis I usually don't discourage walking if I can manage their discomfort. That management can include arthroscopic surgery in some cases, anti-inflammatory medication like Motrin, quadriceps exercises, knee brace, Osteo-bi-flex, Supartz or steroid injections to name a few.

If it has come down to a total knee replacement, the goal is always to gain enough improvement to allow the patient to walk as much as they want to.

Odd and Ends

Knee arthritis is the most common form of arthritis.

Women develop knee arthritis twice as much as men.

Men usually develop it on one side.

Women usually develop it in both knees.

Men and women have similar rates of arthritis of the hip.

Losing even ten pounds of weight can lessen pain in an arthritic knee. This has been proven frequently. Losing even more of course is better.

All Orthopaedic Surgery problems can be evaluated by Dr. Haverbush at the Lakeview Community Wellness Center in Lakeview or at the office in Alma at 315 Warwick Dr., Alma, Michigan.

Please call 989-463-6092 for information or to schedule an appointment.

Future Lakeview Community Wellness Center Clinic dates are February 20 and March 6, 2009.

Please don't forget there is a wealth of accurate information about all the Orthopaedic conditions I treat on the office teaching website www.orthopodsurgeon.com. Please log on and check it out.

We are happy to answer questions from readers. You can e-mail me at orthopodsurgeon@hotmail.com or write to me at 315 Warwick Dr., Alma, Michigan 48801.

Our goal is simple - To help people return to more pain free functional lives.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush