

Lakeview Community Wellness Center Orthopaedic Connection

If Infection in a Joint Replacement Sets In

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Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

Last week I wrote about protecting total joint replacement patients with antibiotics. It is our great hope for our patients that joint infection will never occur.

I know that there are a lot of knee, hip, and shoulder joint replacement patients out there who could benefit from this information today.

An infected prosthesis is an extremely serious Orthopaedic problem, but it is highly treatable if caught EARLY.

How It Happens

The source of the infection as we mentioned last week is almost always an infection that has developed in another area in the body and eventually spreads to the total joint via the bloodstream.

Once bacteria come into the total joint they grow in the lubricating fluid and hug the plastic and metal parts where antibiotics can't reach them.

If untreated for days the infection can begin to destroy the joint. The infection must be recognized, diagnosed and treated at once. Delay in treatment can allow the infection to spread throughout the body.

Risk Factors For Infection

- Advanced age. Unfortunately this is the age group that needs joint replacements.
- Patient immunity decreases with age.
- Diabetes
- Rheumatoid Arthritis
- Heart Valve infection

Symptoms

Many joint replacement patients still have some pain around the joint long after surgery, maybe permanently. What we are talking about here is a different kind of pain.

Worse pain coming on suddenly; swelling, joint hot, red. It's harder to tell in the hip than the shoulder and the knee if infection is present.

Diagnosis

I have a very high index of suspicion about these things so I try to see the person right away.

- Thorough history and exam
- Plain x-rays
- Blood (lab) work
- Aspiration of fluid from the joint. It must be done before any antibiotics are given.

Treatment

The person must be hospitalized for IV antibiotics. This is often combined with surgical drainage of the joint to "wash it out" and possibly replace one of the components. The patient definitely will be in the hospital for several days followed by IV antibiotics at home for at least 6 weeks. This is never a condition that can be managed with antibiotics by mouth alone.

Outlook

- Depends on how far the infection has advanced.
- Depends on the type of bacteria
- Depends on the patient's age and over all health.

The joint infection has to be recognized early and aggressively treated to at least have a chance of controlling it. This is it in a nutshell.

Lakeview Area News Archive and Office Website

www.orthopodsurgeon.com, the office website has been completely redone and awaits your inspection. I urge you to check it out.

Orthopaedic Clinic

The Orthopaedic Clinic at Lakeview Community Wellness Center exists for you. All Orthopaedic problems I treat can be evaluated there.

Approaching Clinic dates are September 3 and September 17, 2010. Call 989-463-6092 to make an appointment at the Clinic or the office in Alma, 315 Warwick Dr.

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