Doc, Would a Knee Brace Help?

The answer is almost always, maybe.

Knee braces have been around forever and everyone thinks they know something about them. Most patients think they can go to Wal-Mart and get a "brace" to help their knee problem.

A lot of our patients have gone to get one to wear even before they come to see me about the knee problem.

Usually what they have gotten is some type of an elastic knee sleeve that they call a brace. There is nothing wrong with this, if you get one that fits and it seems to be relieving your knee pain. At least it probably can't do any harm, which is important.

Braces are worn for a wide variety of reasons from simple strains and contusions to complex ligament injuries/repairs and osteoarthritis.

Sleeves

These are elastic, flexible, may have stays on each side, may have straps and the patella area may be open or closed.

They protect the knee area and provide modest support of the patella and tissues about the knee.

Wrap around knee supports are more adjustable, but do about the same thing as a sleeve.

Braces

Braces have hinges and are more supportive than a sleeve. They come in a large variety of sizes and lengths. They are prescribed for more complicated knee problems such as knee ligament injuries and osteoarthritis. You can even get a hinge knee brace at Wal-Mart or other similar place, but in general I don't recommend it because most of the time it's the wrong size and there is no one there who can help you get what is best for you.

There are a ton of different braces. Many companies make them and each company has a large number of different models for men, women, younger people and a variety of knee problems. It's very confusing.

The materials that go into the brace vary tremendously as do the design of the hinges and the frame of the brace.

Some patients need a custom brace rather than an off the shelf model.

Cost depends on how complicated and how well made the brace is.

Getting the right brace for a particular patient and their problem used to be very difficult. Fortunately, now we have nearby a brace shop that is very knowledgeable about all the different models and types and helps us by working with the patient to get the right fit for the patient and for the particular knee disorder.

Braces are usually worn for a period of time after knee ligament injury and/or surgery to support healing tissues. It could be for months.

When a brace is prescribed for arthritis the patient typically wears it for several months and then stops because it becomes too uncomfortable or inconvenient to wear. They then begin to think about a total knee replacement.

Knee problems or any Orthopaedic Surgery condition can be evaluated by Dr. Haverbush at the Lakeview Community Wellness Center.

Future clinic dates are Friday, April 18, May 2, May 16, 2008.

Please call 989-463-6092 to schedule an appointment.

Dr. Haverbush