

Why Does My Total Knee Hurt?

This week we are continuing our discussion about total knee replacements. It will mean more to you if you were here in class last week. If you weren't, I'll accept your excuse and briefly tell you what we were talking about.

Some total knees continue to hurt after surgery for a variable length of time. "How come, didn't you replace the joint?" Yes _____, but all the tissues holding that shiny new knee are your own ouchy, stiff, "arthritic tissues" which were not replaced. "Oh, I didn't know that."

Class, please know, I am not downing Total Knee Replacements. Why would I? I do a lot of them and have for many years. It is a wonderful operation. It has helped millions of people **"to return to more pain free functional lives"**. It is our mission. We have a banner in the office proudly telling patients that fact and I close my article each week with that statement.

Total Knee Replacement is a wonderful operation to be able to offer our patients who have arthritis severe enough to undergo it. I like how my patients turn out after total knee surgery.

The results though will probably never approach those of a Total Hip Replacement. Vastly different joints. Much longer rehab after surgery with Total Knee Replacement. More pain, swelling, etc.

We shouldn't compare apples and oranges. Don't compare Total Knees to Total Hips.

Now what?

If we do encounter a person who has unusual pain following total knee surgery we do not just tell them your x-ray looks fine, good-bye.

Many patients have come to me with this story. The surgeon who did their surgery said your knee looks O.K. and so does your x-ray. "But doc my knee just hurts."

"You will be fine. Good-bye."

It doesn't give the patient any hope. I have heard this story countless times. I have never done that to a patient. It is up to us to keep treating and searching for a cause of their pain and problem.

"You will just have to learn to live with it" is a phrase not in my vocabulary.

I will keep searching until I can explain it and hopefully help the situation. If I can't, sure enough there is always someone else out there who I may know that can help the patient. It is my job to make the arrangements. Patients usually have no idea who they should see so they end up going from one place to another getting very frustrated.

There are several things that can cause persistent pain after a total knee. Those have to be checked out. It's too technical to go into a lot of detail here.

After all things have been checked and whatever treatment administered and the knee still hurts, it may be a waiting game to see what further time and healing will accomplish. Total knee replacement may be the perfect example of why you can never guarantee what a result will be in surgery, because you can't know in advance how a person's body will react to the surgery.

The fact is the majority of Total Knee surgery patients do eventually get enough relief to be much better than they were before surgery even though it is not 100% better. In school 100% is A+. In Total Knee Replacements there are a lot of A and B grades. Few A+'s.

All Orthopaedic Surgery problems including knee arthritis 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 January 2, 2009 and January 16, 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