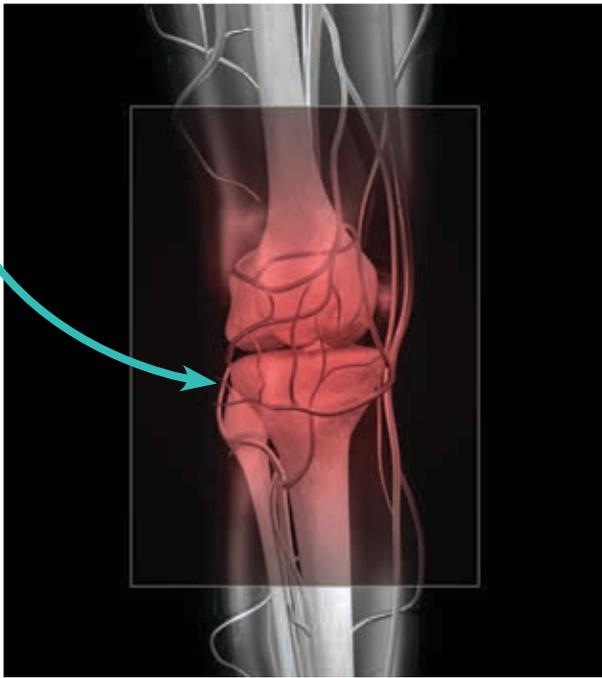




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WELCOA'S ONLINE SELF-CARE BULLETIN

## Who Needs A **Knee** Replacement?



Knee replacement involves removing parts of your natural knee joint and replacing them with artificial parts. Knee replacement is the most common type of joint replacement surgery.

Several forms of arthritis can damage knees and cause so much pain and disability that knees need to be replaced. Certain knee deformities—such as bowed legs or knock

knees—can wear down cartilage and create difficulties. Over time, this creates stress on the joints that can wear down cartilage and lead to pain and disability. In these cases, knee replacement can restore the normal alignment of the knee and correct disability.

Knee damage can also result from a problem called avascular necrosis, or osteonecrosis, in which the bones lose their blood supply, die, and eventually collapse. If other treatments haven't helped, your doctor may suggest knee replacement when pain and stiffness begin to interfere with your everyday activities.

If you'd like to consider knee replacement, ask your doctor to refer you to an orthopedic surgeon, a doctor specially trained to treat problems of the bones and joints.

### Other Treatments

Your doctor may recommend knee replacement if pain and stiffness interfere with your ability to do everyday activities—particularly if other treatments have not helped.

Treatments your doctor will likely recommend before knee replacement include:

- **exercises** to strengthen the muscles around the knee and improve flexibility
- **weight loss**, if needed, to reduce the load the knee must bear
- **walking aids** such as canes to reduce stress on the joint
- **shoe inserts** to improve the knee's alignment
- **medicines** to relieve pain

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## Medicines To Relieve Knee Pain

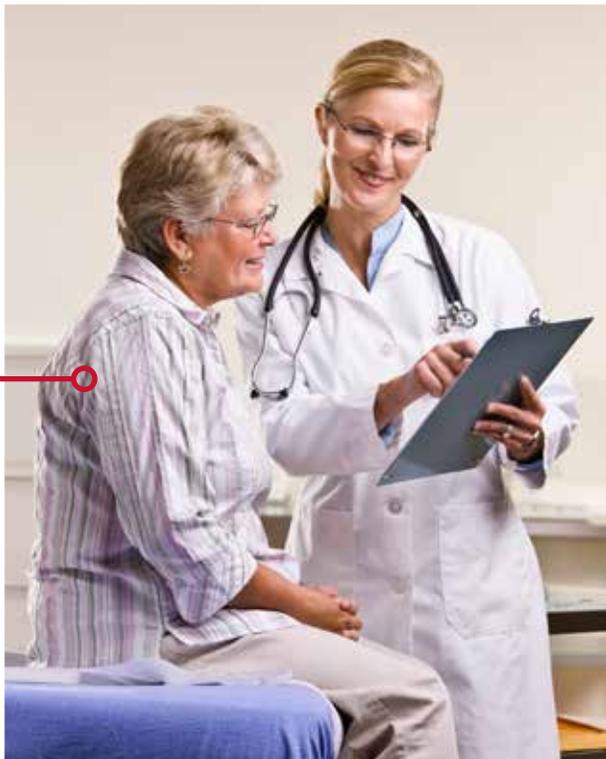
Several different medicines can be useful for knee pain. Some medicines are taken by mouth. These include analgesic medications such as acetaminophen and tramadol, and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as ibuprofen or naproxen. Some, referred to as topical analgesics, are rubbed into the skin directly over the knee. Others are injected into the knee joint. These include corticosteroids, which are strong inflammation-fighting drugs, and hyaluronic acid substitutes, also called viscosupplements, which are designed to replace a substance that gives joint fluid its “slipperiness.”

## Who Shouldn't Have Knee Replacement Surgery

Although knee replacement is a common surgery, it is not for everyone. For example, you should not have a knee replacement if you have an infection of the knee, a severe nerve disorder, or severe blood vessel disease. Your doctor may also advise against surgery if you are severely overweight, have heart or lung disorders that could complicate surgery or anesthesia, or have a skin condition such as psoriasis where the incisions would be made.

Remember, the decision to have knee replacement surgery is one you must make with your doctor and your family. If you would like to consider knee replacement surgery, ask your doctor to refer you for evaluation to an orthopedic surgeon, a doctor specially trained to treat problems with the bones and joints.

The surgeon must consider many factors before recommending knee replacement. People who are generally healthy are the best candidates for the surgery, and those who have surgery before advanced joint damage occurs tend to recover more quickly and have better outcomes.



*Remember, the decision to have knee replacement surgery is one you must make with your doctors and your family.*