

Knee Osteoarthritis: Treatment Options

Osteoarthritis is when the cushion (cartilage) between your bones breaks down. It can cause pain and stiffness.

CUSTOMIZED FOR: 80 years or older

This decision aid is for people who have symptoms from osteoarthritis. It is not for people who have other causes of arthritis or who have had knee surgery.

Patient Questions	Treatment without surgery	Knee replacement	Arthroscopy
What does the treatment involve?	Options include exercises, physical therapy, a knee brace, weight loss, and pain relievers using pills, cream, or shots.	Your knee will be replaced with plastic, metal, or other material. You may spend 1 to 5 days in the hospital. Discuss costs.	You will have surgery inside your knee through very small cuts. You can go home the same day. Discuss costs.
Will it help my pain or activity?	It may for most people. About 69 out of 100 people (69%) have less pain and about 59 out of 100 people (59%) find it easier to do things at 1 year.	It may for most people. About 83 out of 100 people (83%) have less pain and about 89 out of 100 people (89%) find it easier to do things at 1 year.	About 13 out of 100 people (13%) have less pain or find it easier to do things in the first few months. This surgery does not lead to less pain or make it easier to do things in the long term.
How long will it work?	It depends on the treatment.	Your new knee may last more than 15 years. About 20 out of 100 people (20%) will have it replaced again within 15 years.	This surgery does not lead to less pain or better function in the long term.
What are the side effects?	It depends on the treatment.	Pain from the surgery can be the worst in the first 2 weeks and go away over 3 months. You will have pain, swelling, oozing from the stitches, or itching.	About 2 out of 100 people (2%) have tendonitis (problems with the tissue that attaches the muscle to the bone).
What are the risks?	It depends on the treatment.	Out of 100 people more than 80 years old: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 (6%) have stiffness needing treatment under anesthesia • 2 (2%) may have a blood clot in the leg • Up to 2 (2%) have an infection About 1 out of 100 people (1%) have a heart attack, blood clot in the lung, or die.	About 1 out of 100 people (1%) may have blood clots. Fewer than 1 out of 100 people (less than 1%) die or have an infection.
When will I recover?	Does not apply	You may take about 3 months before returning to work or sport. You may be able to drive again within 6 weeks.	You will likely be able to return to your usual activities within 8 weeks or sooner.

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NOTE: The following options were available but not selected when this decision aid was generated:

Partial knee replacement, Osteotomy

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Competing Interests

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