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# Age no bar for replacing knees

## Younger Patients With Acute Conditions Flock To Hospitals For Surgery

Risha Chitlangia | tnn

**New Delhi:** Advanced technology, better quality of implants and growing consumer awareness has made knee replacement one of the commonest surgeries in city hospitals. If hospital authorities are to be believed, the patient load has increased three times in the last five years. But doctors warn that indiscriminate prescription of the surgery may not bode well for patients.

Till a few years back, only patients in the above 55-60 years age group were undergoing knee replacement. But now younger patients who have an acute condition are going for it. "A majority of patients come to us in the last stages, when the knee has completely worn out. But with growing awareness, young people (above the age of 45) with acute knee pain are also consulting us. If a patient comes in the early stages, the recovery is faster and there are less chances of a complication. The quality of implants available now is very good and they last for 20-22 years — which means a 45-year-old may need just one revision surgery. It's worth doing if the quality of life improves," said Dr Ashok Rajgopal, head of the knee replacement unit at Fortis

### KNEE REPLACEMENT SURGERY

Once considered a rare procedure, knee replacement surgery has now become common with technological advancement. The number of cases has increased three times in the past five years. The number of women patients is three times that of men

#### COMMON PROCEDURES

**Total knee replacement:** Entire knee is replaced with an artificial one  
**Cost: Rs 1.75L-2L**

**Partial knee replacement:** One or two of three compartments replaced  
**Cost: Rs 1.2L-1.5L**

#### TYPES OF KNEE

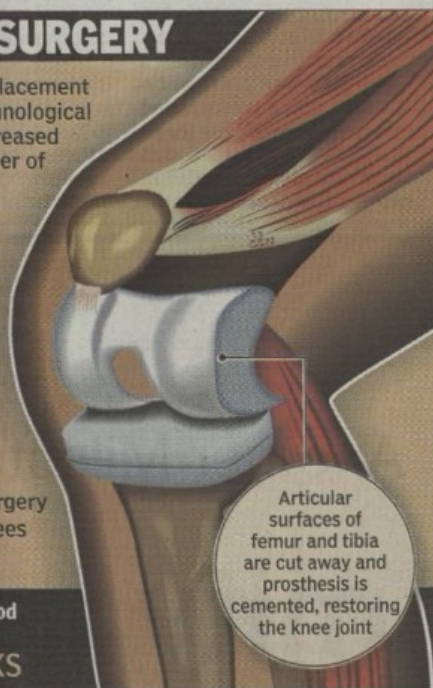
**Normal Knee:** Given to patients who don't have much flexibility in their knee  
**Hi-flex knee:** Given to patients with good amount of flexibility in their knee before surgery  
**Gender knee:** There are separate sets of knees available for male and female

Duration

45mins-1hr

Recovery period

6weeks



arthritis, degenerative arthritis etc should not be neglected. "An elderly person with acute knee pain along with underlying medical conditions like arthritis is an ideal candidate. The condition of the knee before surgery decides what sort of a prosthesis will be used. For example, if the flexibility is poor before replacement, then a hi-flex knee would be of little help," said Dr Rajesh Bawari, senior orthopaedic surgeon, Max Healthcare. He added that there has been a manifold increase in knee replacement surgeries in his hospital. "Earlier we used to do 15-20 cases a month, now we do 50-60 cases. The number of women undergoing knee replacement is double the number of men," he said.

The post-operation recovery depends a lot on the condition of the knee before surgery. "If the muscles around the knee have collapsed then the recovery will take time. We advice six weeks of physiotherapy to all our patients, but patients with a lot of wear and tear of the muscles have to work very hard. It is the muscles which support the implant," said Dr Yash Gulati, senior consultant orthopaedic surgeon, Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals.

risha.chitlangia@timesgroup.com

Healthcare.

The sudden increase in demand has resulted in the mushrooming of knee replacement units in smaller hospitals across the city. "One doesn't need a special setup for starting knee replacement surgery. A trained doctor is all you need. But it is true that doctors sometimes prescribe total knee replacement even when par-

tial replacement or other pain management techniques could be a solution," said an orthopaedic surgeon speaking on condition of anonymity.

Agrees Dr P K Dave, head of the department of orthopaedics, Rockland Hospital, "The patient has to be evaluated properly before he/she is suggested a knee replacement. One should check

if the patient shows cardinal signs like deformity, instability in the knee, acute pain affecting day to day activities etc. There have been cases where doctors have not waited long enough before doing a replacement surgery. Patients need to be more aware."

But doctors stress that knee pain for long, especially in people with rheumatoid