



Orthopedic options booming for boomers

As the baby boomer generation keeps on hitting the links and tennis courts, joint replacements have continued to evolve and grow in popularity. According to the latest National Center for Health Statistics, in 2005 about 534,000 total knee replacements and 235,000 total hip replacements were performed.

Ammar Anbari, MD, a member of the Backus Medical Staff who specializes in shoulder, hip and knee arthroscopy and replacement, said joint replacements have improved dramatically in the last 10 to 15 years, with new materials and different procedures available. This gives people more options depending on the reasons they need the surgery, their age, and activity level.



Options for hip repairs



"Surgeons have learned valuable lessons about **hip replacement** over the last decade, with new materials that have increased the longevity of the prosthesis," Dr. Anbari said. Previously the prosthesis was made with a metal ball in a plastic socket, and the plastic was subject to gradual wear with repetitive use.

For younger patients there are two options, one of which is **metal on metal**. "There is a theoretical risk of increasing the level of metal ions in the body, so we don't recommend them for women of childbearing age, but for the right patient, this is an excellent option that lasts a long time," he said.

The second option is **ceramic on plastic**. "Previously, ceramic got a bad rap, because it could shatter from a fall, but now there have been modifications and it is much stronger," Dr. Anbari said. "This is a great option for younger women or men."

New materials improve knee replacements

Dr. Anbari said the design for a knee replacement is basically the same as it has been, but again new materials have proven more resistant, so the replacement lasts longer.

William Richeimer, MD, an orthopedic surgeon on the Backus

Medical Staff, said the plastic used is much stronger than in the past. "It used to be the replacement would last 12 to 14 years. Now, with some types of plastics, they can last up to 30 years," he said. Dr. Richeimer, who has been performing joint replacement surgeries since the 1970s, also said there is much better pain control postoperatively. One of the options is **patient controlled analgesia**, where an infusion pump intravenously delivers an appropriate dose of pain medication.

Newer instruments have proven more accurate for bone cuts, and if the knee is aligned anatomically, the joint replacement lasts longer, Dr. Anbari explained. Patients can also have **partial knee replacement**, where only the arthritic portion of the knee is replaced and the rest of the knee retains the original bone, cartilage, and ligaments. "This involves a smaller incision and can be an outpatient surgery. It replaces only the problem area and patients have been really pleased," he said. "It can be a bridge before needing total knee replacement."

Shoulder surgery evolves



Shoulder resurfacing has become more mainstream in the past 10 years, and allows for greater range of motion. "Through a small incision, we can take out the worn and dead cartilage and put a cap on the ball of the shoulder," Dr. Anbari said. "Many more patients are active in this age group than in the past so this

allows them to continue to be active."

Shoulder surgery has also evolved, with options such as a reverse shoulder surgery, total replacement surgery or arthroscopic shoulder reconstruction.

Cartilage restoration

Another option for some younger patients who don't suffer from arthritis, but who have lost cartilage in portions of their hips, shoulders or knees, is cartilage restoration, where cartilage can be repaired or reconstructed using donor tissue. Dr. Anbari had fellowship training in the latest cartilage restoration procedures.