

Walk Away from Knee Pain

Contributed by Susan Chabot, MD, Chief of Orthopedic Surgery at Norwood Hospital

Have you stopped or cut back your favorite activities or fitness routines because it's just too painful on your knees? If so, you may be one of 15 million Americans suffering from osteoarthritis of the knee.

Osteoarthritis commonly impacts people especially over the age of 55 and almost half of us will develop it in our lifetimes. Not surprisingly, individuals who have worked or participated in long-term impact activities such as sports are at a greater risk. Genetics can also play a role in developing osteoarthritis, as can obesity; increased weight puts greater stress on the knees helping to further the disease.

Osteoarthritis is a degenerative disease that causes the cartilage cushion in healthy joints to break down, resulting in knee pain. Symptoms include pain, stiffness, swelling, instability and even a grating, or crunching, sensation when you move.

The disease is degenerative, a leading cause of disability, and ultimately, a quality of life issue. Osteoarthritis begins as minor instances of discomfort and reduced mobility but progresses to more severe pain, making simple tasks like climbing stairs and walking a challenge.

The good news is that with advances in non-surgical and surgical treatments, many people suffering from knee pain can find relief and regain their quality of life. If you are experiencing knee pain, shedding extra pounds may help, and switching to low-impact physical activities such as swimming or biking will put less stress on your knees. You should also consult with a physician who can evaluate your individual situation.

Depending on the severity of your disease and your overall health you may ultimately be a candidate for partial or total knee replacement. While it sounds scary, successful knee replacements have restored mobility and comfort to many, and often people will remark that they only wish they'd done it sooner.

One of the newest advances in partial knee replacement is a robotic-assisted procedure called MAKOplasty which combines computer imaging of the anatomy and a surgeon-controlled robotic arm technology to provide highly precise placement of implants. This state-of-the-art surgical procedure has seen improvements in outcomes over traditional partial knee replacement and is a great option for some patients. Typically, after a short hospital stay patients experience a rapid recovery period and are able to return to many of the activities they enjoyed.

If you are experiencing knee pain, seek the advice of a physician to discuss the range of treatment options available to you. Treatment may be easier, with greater options, if addressed sooner rather than later, so don't wait until you can't climb the stairs.

Norwood Hospital is offering a free information session on Osteoarthritis, Treatment Options and Makoplasty on Wednesday, April 13th, at 6pm at Norwood Hospital in the Abraham-Sieracki Conference Room.