

Possible Complications of Total Knee Replacement

With the recent advent of new technology and the medical monitoring, total knee replacement surgery has seen vast improvements in success. Nonetheless, you need to be informed of the risks involved.

Infection, occurring in 1-2% of patients, can be caused by skin or air contamination. Antibiotics given in the hospital prior to surgery have improved this risk factor. You will arrive early before your surgery to make sure the antibiotics have fully absorbed into your tissues.

Prevention of infection starts with preoperative preparedness. One of the simplest thing is to solve is gentle hygiene and correction of any chronic infection of the mouth or that matter any potential infectious area of the body. Additionally, if you have a history of infections or if in your family history you could be a carrier of bacteria. Often this is a situation where one does not fight infections successfully and may require additional precautionary measures both pre and post operatively. Be sure to inform myself or my staff of this issue.

Pulmonary embolism is a rare but potentially dangerous complication that occurs in less than 1% of patients when blood clots form in the lungs. Postoperative blood thinners and exercises learned during your hospital stay aid in circulation, minimizing the chances of this complication. Symptoms of this included shortness of breath, coughing up blood, weakness and energy loss and in severe cases even fainting or loss of consciousness. If any of these symptoms appear to be present seek emergent help immediately. Although less symptomatic, swelling in the lower extremity along with progressive edema and or pain can be a sign clots in the leg which may result in these above symptoms which can be life-threatening. For more detail regarding this please refer to the webpage under the title of "Deep Vein Thrombosis"

Damage to knee tendons can also occur. Patellar tendon detachment occurs in 2 out of every 1,000 cases. This damage generally requires surgery to repair the tear. In addition, damage to nerves can occasionally cause a foot drop deformity, requiring lengthy rehab and/or braces. Some incisional numbness on the outer portion of the incision almost always occurs as a result of the incision.

Occasionally, patients will experience a "stiff knee" or "loose knee" after their surgery that does not decrease after physical therapy. Surgery to repair this can lessen the disability from this complication.

If a revision knee replacement is being performed instead of a first time replacement, a good rule of thumb is to double the above complication statistics. As with any anesthetic, heart attack, strokes, organ failure, or combinations of the above can occur. Our job is to troubleshoot and make sure your stay and recovery with us is the safest and most efficient possible. My staff and I value the trust you have put in us and will strive to make your recovery uneventful and complete.