



# Q&A

Mr Martin Goddard, Consultant Orthopaedic Knee Surgeon at Parkside Hospital in Wimbledon shares his experience with Life magazine readers

**Q. How can I prevent wear and tear on my knees?**

There is no guaranteed way to prevent knee arthritis, but you can help to reduce your risk and delay its potential onset. Keeping a normal body weight (BMI) is important to reduce pressure across the joint surfaces. Low impact exercise such as swimming and cycling are excellent to help achieve this, as well as keeping the muscles strong around the knee. Thirty minutes, three times a week, of moderately intense exercise will strengthen the muscles that support your knees. Improved general aerobic fitness will have other health benefits, including preventing diabetes, and pilates and yoga help maintain flexibility and movement. You can avoid sports injuries by using proper equipment and adequate training. This is important for skiers as some knee injuries may lead to arthritis in the future.

**Q. Should I take supplements to protect my joints?**

Medical research has not shown any benefit in taking glucosamine or chondroitin supplements. Animal studies investigating the effectiveness of fish oils in preventing arthritis have shown a connection between omega-3 and joint health, but there are few human studies that confirm their benefit. A balanced, healthy diet should provide all the nutrition you need for healthy joints anyway!

**Q. Should I wear a knee support if I get an achy knee when playing sport?**

There are many different types of knee support. Soft knee supports offer some compression around the knee joint and can be safely worn if patients find them helpful. Prescription 'off loader' braces transfer body weight away from the arthritic part of the knee, reducing pain and improving function. It is important to have an accurate diagnosis of your symptoms and a knee surgeon can advise on whether a brace will be helpful.

**Q. What symptoms should I worry about?**

Pain and sudden swelling after a twisting injury during sport can indicate a significant knee ligament injury, often to the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL). If after an injury you are not able to fully straighten your knee (called a 'locked knee'), you may have a meniscal tear blocking movement. In this case, you should see a consultant orthopaedic knee surgeon.

**Q. How do I know if I need a knee replacement?**

You may need a knee replacement if your arthritis causes pain, stiffness, instability or loss of function that severely affects your daily life and activities, and other non-operative treatments have not worked.

A consultant orthopaedic knee surgeon will be able to confirm that a knee replacement is the most sensible course of treatment.

**Q. What are the benefits of a knee replacement?**

Pain relief is the main advantage of a knee replacement and you should expect to become more mobile too. Everyday activities like walking and climbing stairs should become easier, and swimming, tennis, cycling or golf should be possible.

**Q. Are there any possible disadvantages of knee replacement surgery?**

A replacement knee will never feel quite as good as a natural knee. Most knee replacements are not designed to bend as much as a healthy, natural knee and kneeling is often uncomfortable. A replacement knee may wear out with time. For 80% of people a knee replacement will last for 20 years. Younger or overweight patients may wear the replaced knee out more quickly and need another operation. A knee replacement can be done again if it wears out, but revision surgery is more complex and the benefits tend to lessen with each revision surgery.

**Q. Are there any other options?**

If arthritis only affects one side of your knee, usually the inner side, it may be possible to have a half knee replacement (sometimes called partial or unicompartmental). Partial knee replacements can be carried out through a smaller cut and you usually recover more quickly. A partial knee replacement feels much more like a natural knee, although it is not a suitable option for everyone. ■



## THE DETAILS

For further information or to book a consultation with a specialist at Parkside Hospital,

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