

Deferring or Pre-Emptying Joint Replacement - Weight Loss and Improving Fitness Come First

Joint replacement is generally reserved for patients with endstage (bone-on-bone) arthritis, cannot be undone, and about 3% of patients that undergo joint replacement will experience a major complication of the operation that might place them in worse straits than they were in before surgery.

Some patients with less than bone-on-bone arthritic deterioration of a hip, knee, or shoulder might benefit from less extensive operations and most patients, regardless of the degree of radiographically evident arthritis, may benefit from non-operative interventions.

Weight Loss and Fitness

Improving one's fitness and achieving ideal body weight is likely the single most effective, least expensive, risk-free, and generally beneficial intervention that an arthritic patient can employ. This requires both motivation and a long-term commitment. A community based supervised exercise program (Pilates, Yoga, health club or senior center-based exercise classes, or retaining a athletic trainer), overlapping with physical therapy, and combined with an structured weight loss program are an effective means of improving fitness and achieving weight loss.

Walking with trekking poles (Nordic Walking), cycling (real or stationary), elliptical trainers, swimming, or water walking or aerobics are all examples of activities that are generally well tolerated by arthritic patients.

Mature Americans tend to gain weight unless they exercise regularly (an hour or more of dedicated exercise 6 days a week). In addition to alleviating the symptoms of arthritis, regular exercise improves overall health and wellbeing. **The Anchorage Senior Center offers excellent exercise equipment and exercise classes at minimal expense.**

Recording one's weight daily on a calendar posted by the scale is critical to weight loss. "Lose it" is a good smartphone and internet-based application for logging exercise and calories and for structuring a weight loss plan. It should be kept in mind that each surplus pound of body weight increases the pressure across an arthritic hip or knee joint by 3 pounds.