

Celebrate Wellness!

Healthy Hips, Knees and Other Joints

Have you, a friend, or a family member had a joint replacement? How can you maximize the quantity and quality of your life, while minimizing the need for joint replacement, and re-replacement procedures? Here are some facts and tips, courtesy of the Virginia Chiropractic Association.

During 1979-2002, hip replacement rates for American seniors increased approximately 800%.ⁱ During that timeframe, the rate of knee replacement increased roughly 400%; and the largest increase was among those under age 50.ⁱⁱ According to the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons, Americans now receive approximately 193,000 total hip replacementsⁱⁱⁱ and 581,000 knee replacements^{iv} per year. Those 581,000 knee replacements are projected to balloon to 3.48 million by the year 2030.^v We are clearly facing an epidemic of arthritis and joint replacement.

One of the best approaches to health is prevention. Most joint surfaces are covered in hyaline, a very smooth cartilage that is mostly water. By maintaining proper hydration levels and functional joint strength around your major weight-bearing joints, you'll have taken some strong positive steps towards joint longevity. Who'd have thought that a simple glass of water could have such power to protect your body's frame?

The knee joints are, loosely speaking, hinge joints. They do rotate some, but not with the greater range of motion that you expect from a forearm where it rotates at the elbow. If the inside of the foot collapses too much (pronation) during walking, running, or standing, the knee will be stressed to turn or twist. The long-term consequence is stress and wear on the inside of the knee. Also, the muscles in the front of the thigh tend to pull on the knee in ways that are stressful to the knee -- especially if you have wide hips (a large "Q Angle," as your doctor will refer to it). No, you can't get a new body; but with the help of a professional, you can decrease damaging stresses and help your knees move (or "track") their best. This is where your chiropractic doctor comes in.

Just like alignment issues are important for your knees, they also affect the hips and back. Some people's hip bones are different from one side to the other, and some people have a short leg on one side. The muscles around the pelvis connect to the spine, the ribs, the hips, even the knees. Helping them all relate in a healthy way is one of the services a doctor of chiropractic can provide.

Hydration and maintaining joint strength and stability requires daily attention. Preventing premature joint wear is, in no small part, your job; but your partner in this process is your doctor of chiropractic. Alignment might refer to your auto tires wear; it also refers to how your foot relates to the ground, how your knees relate to your hips, how your hips relate to your spine... and the other way around. Every joint in the body affects other joints, just as a disturbance in the nervous system in one area (for example, the pain of an ankle sprain) can affect other areas (for example, back pain from limping around on the aforementioned ankle). We've all fallen as children, and many of us have had other mishaps, accidents, and traumas in life. Even though some or even all of the pain from an injury might fade, unless movement and related neurological patterns are normalized, the old and forgotten injuries of life may come to haunt us in the form of subtle misalignments... and the not-so-subtle result of pain, joint failure, and need for joint replacement. Doctors of chiropractic focus on the human frame and its neurological and structural balance, to help you get plenty of mileage out of your body.

Even if you've already had replacements in a knee, hips, the spine, shoulders, elbows, or other joints, chiropractic is still an important part of living well. Chiropractic doctors see artificial joints every day on x-rays, so you'll have plenty of company in our office. Some doctors of chiropractic have special training in sports and rehabilitation, and all doctors of chiropractic are trained in the function of the nervous system and every -- yes, every -- joint in the human body. Doctors of chiropractic can serve as the "body shop" when you have a serious injury, but they also shine in the area of rehabilitation and -- just like the auto shop -- functional alignment to keep your joints working to their full and optimal capacity. That's something you'll appreciate whether your goal is to attain peak performance, or to maximize the life of your real and already-replaced joints.

Doctors of chiropractic are trained to care for people of all ages, and they focus not just on avoiding pain but on helping you maximize your quality of life. If you haven't already done so, consider taking advantage of the full range of their skill and training. Your entire family will reap the rewards for many years, and many generations, to come.



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ⁱ CDC, the National Center for Health Statistics, as noted at cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5407a6.htm.

ⁱⁱ *Journal of Bone & Joint Surgery*, Vol. 89-A, No. 12, December 2007

ⁱⁱⁱ American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons, at <http://orthoinfo.aaos.org/topic.cfm?topic=A00377>

^{iv} American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons, at <http://orthoinfo.aaos.org/topic.cfm?topic=A00389>

^v *Journal of Bone & Joint Surgery*, Vol. 89-A, No. 12, December 2007