



Knowing when
it's time for
joint replacement
can save years
of pain

JOINT DECISION

Karen Barrell's knees hurt for years. It started with the right knee, about the time she first moved to Colorado in 2000. **"I couldn't walk without pain, but it was bearable."** Even with corticosteroid injections, the pain got worse.

"I knew knee replacement was an option, but I thought I would never do it." Then her left knee started hurting. Her right leg bowed. Walking became an ordeal. At the grocery store, she needed a shopping cart to lean on.

In 2016, she took a trip to Vail with her daughter and granddaughter. "And, I absolutely couldn't walk." That's when she knew it was time for surgery.

A PERSONAL DECISION

Earlier, a family friend, who had seen her hobbling, referred her to Colorado Joint Replacement surgeon Jason Jennings, MD, DPT. Jennings gave her corticosteroid injections, and said she might be a candidate for joint replacement, a notion Barrell resisted. After her Vail trip, her resistance shattered. "I met with Dr. Jennings and immediately felt complete confidence in his ability and expertise," Barrell says. "He instilled in me the confidence to get through surgery."

Jennings, who performs both knee and hip replacements, says treatment for osteoarthritis starts with more conservative approaches, and even doing nothing is an option. "I never tell [patients] they have to do anything. It's not a heart attack."

For knee pain, first-line treatment can include activity modification, bracing, physical therapy, and injections.

When those treatments no longer work, joint replacement becomes an

Karen Barrell is on the go again with her granddaughter, Eden, now that knee pain is no longer in the picture.

option. Jennings says the timing of surgery is a decision he doesn't nudge patients into. "That's individualized for each patient. For some, it's the inability to go to the grocery store. For others, it's when they can't go on long hikes. But it's up to them when they wave the white flag."

PREPARING THE WAY

Some studies suggest that waiting too long can delay recovery from surgery because muscles around the joints weaken from lack of use.



Dr. Jason Jennings

"It's true that going in stronger is better as far as recovering quickly," Jennings says. But even patients who can barely walk, let alone exercise, before surgery will experience significant relief and benefit, he says.

When Barrell decided to have her knee replaced, she threw herself into the preparation and was amazed at how well her surgery at Porter Adventist Hospital went. "I had surgery on Friday, and went home Saturday afternoon. By Monday I was being driven to physical therapy."

SPECIALLY DESIGNED CENTER

At Porter Adventist Hospital, a special center designed solely for joint replacement patients features specially trained nurses, rehab specialists, and surgical teams. Under the medical guidance of Colorado Joint Replacement, Jennings' group, the surgical team uses the latest research to improve outcomes. The team, for instance, uses spinal anesthesia rather than general. This means most patients can get out of bed within hours of surgery — an important factor in a speedy and successful recovery.

"At Porter, they got me up and walking so quickly. I was walking up and down stairs, with help, before I left the hospital," Barrell says.

At two weeks, she stopped taking pain medications. At three weeks, she was back on the job, for brief shifts, at a baby boutique, and she kept up her physical therapy, with the help and support of an encouraging physical therapist.

"After just three months, I was so thrilled and so relieved that I decided to have the left knee done," Barrell says. That surgery, done last November at Porter Adventist Hospital, was an equal success.



Is now the time?

Learn the factors you should consider when deciding when to have your joint replaced, then take a quiz to see if you are ready in a **FREE** guide at coloradojoint.org/right-time.



Get ready, get set

Good preparation before surgery can make a world of difference when it comes to recovery. The Joint Replacement Center at Porter Adventist Hospital helps by offering all patients a pre-surgery class, workbook, and scheduling physical therapy appointments for post-surgery rehab. Good overall health helps, too. Here are a few tips to consider if you are getting ready for joint replacement surgery:

- **Tame your blood pressure.** If it's too high, your surgery might have to be delayed.
- **Mention your medications.** Ibuprofen, and other blood-thinning medications, can increase bleeding risk. Talk to your doctor about all medications you take, even vitamins and supplements.
- **Get your diabetes in check.** Uncontrolled diabetes can increase your healing time and your infection risk.
- **See your dentist.** Get any dental problems fixed well in advance. If bacteria from dental procedures enters your bloodstream, infections can result.
- **Quit smoking.** Smokers are at greater risk for all kinds of surgical complications.



Colorado Joint leads national research

Colorado Joint Replacement surgeons have published more than 400 research studies and have trained surgeons from around the world. Recently, CJR research was on the cover of two issues of the prestigious medical journal, *The Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery*. One study found that patients who had previous anterior cruciate ligament repairs to their knees were more likely to need follow-up surgeries after total knee replacement. Another study determined how often MRI scans reveal fluid in replaced ceramic-on-polyethylene hips. **To schedule an appointment at Colorado Joint Replacement to assess your knee or hip pain, call 720-372-0935.**

