



Six Essentials to Look for in a Knee Replacement Surgeon — Don't Schedule Without This Checklist

1. Choose a surgeon that uses a quad sparing approach.

In knee replacement surgery, a quad-sparing approach preserves the quadriceps tendon, which can lead to faster recovery and less post-operative pain. While your individual anatomy may not always allow for full preservation, it's important to choose a surgeon who prioritizes minimally invasive techniques and makes every effort to spare the quad when possible.

2. Choose a surgeon that operates in an ASC or at least a low complication hospital.

Location. Location. Location. It's not just important in real estate.

Having knee surgery performed in an Ambulatory Surgery Center (ASC) or a low-complication hospital means the procedure is done in a setting designed for outpatient surgeries, potentially offering a more convenient and cost-effective experience with comparable or even lower complication rates compared to traditional hospital settings.

What you need to know about the facility the surgeon operates in:

Ambulatory Surgery Centers (ASC)

These are facilities focused on providing same-day surgical care, meaning patients have procedures and are discharged to go home on the same day. They are also sometimes referred to as outpatient surgery centers or same-day surgery centers. They are distinct from hospital operating rooms, offering a dedicated setting for specific types of procedures.

ASCs are designed for efficiency, potentially leading to faster scheduling and personalized care with specialized teams. ASCs can also offer a more convenient and potentially less expensive alternative to hospital-based outpatient surgery as they typically have lower overhead costs. But are they as safe as Hospitals? Absolutely! ASCs are oftentimes considered a *safer* option than a traditional hospital as they are subject to far fewer sources

of infection. And rest assured that they are also heavily regulated and must meet strict standards to ensure patient safety and quality of care.

Low-Complication Hospitals:

Some hospitals, particularly those focused on specific specialties or with strong track records in certain procedures, may have lower complication rates compared to larger, more complex institutions. These are like ASCs in that they are subject to far fewer sources of infection than traditional, broad-service hospitals. Look for a hospital that has a low rate of complications for knee replacement by following these steps:

1. Go to the [Medicare Care Compare website](#).
2. Search for your hospital by name or location.
3. Once you're on the hospital's page, select the "Complications & Death" section or filter for "Measure Category: Complications."
4. Find the measure named COMP_HIP_KNEE (or "Hip/Knee replacement complications").
5. This shows the risk-standardized complication rate within 90 days for elective total hip and knee replacements: [healthaffairs.org/complication-rates](https://www.healthaffairs.org/complication-rates).
6. Compare that hospital's percentage to the national benchmark (e.g., around 3.5% nationally for hip/knee).

3. Choose a surgeon who was Fellowship Trained in joint replacement.

A fellowship-trained surgeon is a physician who has completed an additional, specialized period of training, called a fellowship, after finishing their residency program. This extra training allows them to focus on a specific subspecialty within their field, becoming an expert in that area. For example, an orthopedic surgeon might complete a fellowship in sports medicine, joint replacement, or spinal surgery.

Key aspects of fellowship training:

Sub specialization:

Joint Replacement Fellowship enables orthopedic surgeons to hone their skills in Knee and knee replacement, leading to a higher level of expertise.

Advanced Training:

Fellowship involves hands-on experience, often involving hundreds of specialized joint replacement surgeries under the guidance of experienced mentors. Joint Replacement Fellowship allows a surgeon to concentrate on hip, knee, and often shoulder replacement.

Intensive Training:

Joint Replacement Fellowships are typically one to three years in length and involve rigorous training in the chosen subspecialty.

Distinction of Expertise:

By completing a joint replacement fellowship, an orthopedic surgeon demonstrates a dedication to achieving the highest level of knowledge and skill in Knee and knee replacement.

Better Outcomes:

Joint Replacement Fellowship-trained Orthopedic surgeons, with their specialized knowledge and experience, offer patients improved outcomes, faster recovery times, and a lower risk of complications.

4. Choose a surgeon that uses implants with the strongest track record – registry proven implants.

Did you know that the Food and Drug Administration can (and does!) recall Knee implants? Don't let that happen to you. "Registry proven implants" refers to implants that have been monitored and evaluated through implant registries to be safe and effective after implant. Safe and effective implants do not require a recall.

What is an implant registry?

A Knee implant registry is a database that collects information about patients who have received a Knee replacement. The largest one is in Australia; however, we have a growing registry here in America, too.

What kind of data is collected?

Registries collect details about:

- The implant itself (type, model, serial number)
- The implantation procedure (date, location, surgeon)
- Patient characteristics
- Outcomes and complications
- Revisions and failures

How does registry data prove an implant?

While not a guarantee of absolute safety, registry data provides important information for evaluating implant performance:

- **Post-market surveillance:** Registries track the performance of implants after they are released to the market, providing real-world data on their safety and effectiveness in larger and more diverse patient populations than pre-market clinical trials.
- **Identifying outliers:** Registries help identify implants or techniques that may have issues, acting as an early warning system for potential problems. For example, the high failure rate of metal-on-metal implants was first identified in the Australian registry, leading to all responsible surgeons not using this construct.
- **Long-term outcomes:** Registries track implant performance over decades--- until the person dies--- allowing for a better understanding of implants' long-term survival and potential complications.
- **Informational feedback:** Registry data provides feedback to surgeons, the industry, and the public on the performance of different surgical techniques and implant designs.

In essence, "registry proven implants" suggest that an implant has been assessed through the systematic collection of data from a large number of patients, indicating that it has demonstrated a good safety and performance record in real-world use and is not likely to be recalled.

5. Choose a surgeon that uses robotic assistance when performing Knee replacements.

The most common cause of failed Knee replacement surgery (after infection) is loosening implants. Robotic assistance in Knee surgery involves using a robotic arm, guided by the surgeon, to create a snug fit of the implant, and prevent loosening. The robot doesn't operate on its own; the surgeon controls the robotic arm, but it provides real-time feedback and helps to ensure the implant is placed according to the pre-operative plan.

Pre-operative planning:

To begin, a 3D model of your Knee joint is made from a CT scan. This model is used to plan the exact placement of the implant, including the angle and position of the components.

Robotic guidance:

During surgery, the robotic arm is used to guide the surgeon's instruments, ensuring that bone is removed and the implant is placed with high precision.

Enhanced accuracy:

The robotic system helps the surgeon stay within the planned boundaries, minimizing damage to surrounding tissues and facilitates a snug fit.

Benefits:

Robotic assistance can lead to smaller incisions, less blood loss, reduced pain, and a faster recovery time.

Not autonomous:

It's crucial to understand that the robot is an assistant, not a replacement for the surgeon. The surgeon is always in control of the procedure.

6. Choose a surgeon with a record of high patient satisfaction.

Patient satisfaction usually has more to do with the office than with the surgeon. But let's face it, you probably wouldn't even buy a new TV without reading a lot of reviews first. You should put at least that same amount of effort into reviewing a potential surgeon. Thankfully the internet is a treasure trove of information and Reviews so there shouldn't be any shortage of feedback and Reviews of any surgeon you're considering. And if there is, be wary!

Make sure your reviews come from an unbiased source. Reviews on the surgeon's website are worth looking at but consider the source. Try to find Reviews from Google, WebMD, Facebook, etc. to round out research.



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- Evaluating your knee pain and determining if you should be considering surgery
- Evaluating and vetting the best knee replacement surgeons for your specific needs that are accepting new patients and your insurance