

ST. VINCENT CARMEL HOSPITAL

health connections



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Innovative
knee
replacement
technique
lets people
get on with
their lives

Most people who consider having a total knee replacement do so because they want to return to doing the things in life most of us take for granted – taking the stairs, cruising the mall, going on an after-dinner walk with a loved one. Thanks to an advanced surgical technique being used at St. Vincent Carmel Hospital, some patients are able to get back to those things more quickly after surgery.

Innovative tools

Rapid Recovery Microplasty® employs the use of specialized tools that allow a surgeon to move around soft tissue surrounding the knee joint, minimizing cutting through the tissue. In addition, the design of the Microplasty™ instruments make it possible for surgeons to make a smaller incision, which can lead to less scarring, less blood-loss, less pain, and a shorter recovery time.

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“The difference between Microplasty and traditional knee replacement surgery is a four-inch incision versus a 16-inch one,” said Frank Johnson, M.D., who, along with Robert Czarkowski, M.D., has been offering Microplasty since Spring 2004. “By making a smaller incision and fewer cuts to the tissue inside the knee, you are creating less trauma for the tissue, which ultimately speeds recovery and rehabilitation.”

Traditional knee replacement surgery requires an incision from the mid-thigh to the mid-tibia, or shinbone. The more invasive procedure leads to a longer recovery, slowing the patient’s ability to do stairs, get out of chair, lift his leg, explained Dr. Johnson.

Another key element of Microplasty is the GPS system, which uses the patient’s own platelets to encourage healing. Prior to surgery, a small amount of the patient’s blood is drawn. It is then spun in a device called a centrifuge, which separates out the various components of the patient’s blood, including platelets. The GPS system takes the concentration of platelets, which contain growth-factors that promote healing, and makes a platelet-rich gel. This gel is applied to the joint and soft tissue of the new joint to accelerate the build-up of hard and soft tissue in the patient’s recovery.

“Platelet gel derivatives contribute to better incision healing, less swelling, and possibly a lesser need for narcotic pain medication,” Dr. Czarkowski said, though he noted the use of platelet-rich gel is not unique to Microplasty.

With all of its benefits, who wouldn’t take the “get-better-quicker” route? Unfortunately, not every person who needs a total knee replacement is a good candidate for Microplasty.

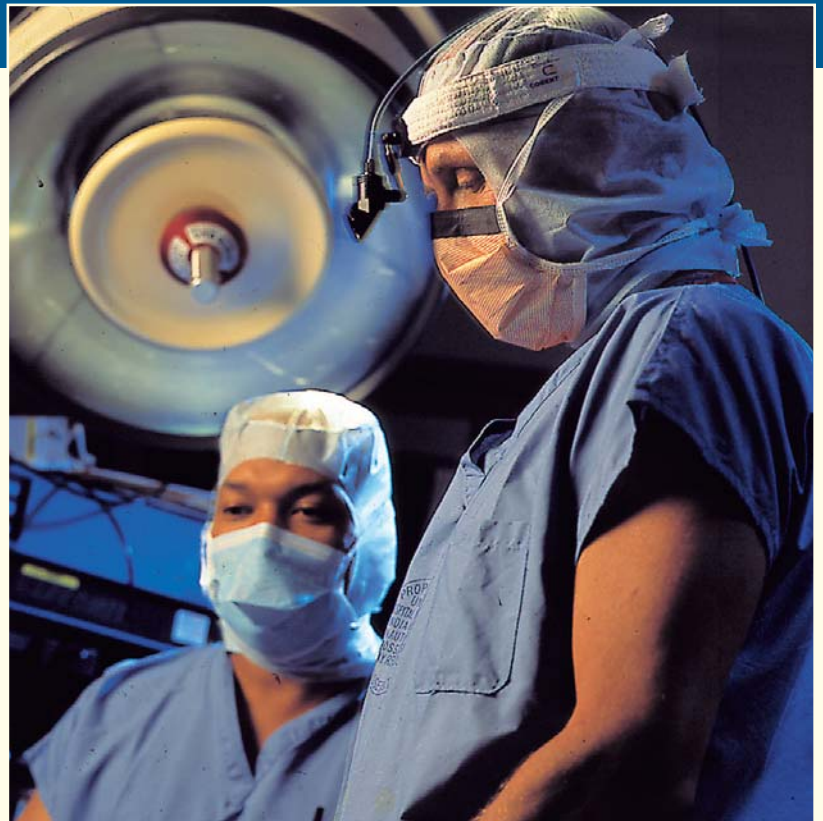
“Microplasty is a good surgical technique for use with patients who have not had pain relief after trying all conservative treatments, such as moderation of activities, rest and the use of anti-inflammatory medication,” Dr. Czarkowski said. “In addition, candidates for Microplasty must not have severe heart disease or uncontrolled diabetes.”

Back to life as normal

Once the surgeon’s work in the operating room is over, the next phase of recovery is up to the patient.

“Most Microplasty patients will stay in the hospital for two to three days,” Dr. Czarkowski said. “Once they’ve returned home, we encourage them to be as active as possible. They’ll have a better overall recovery if they keep up with physical therapy and home exercises.”

Dr. Johnson estimates that within two weeks of surgery, 80 percent of



Microplasty patients are walking without the use of canes or walkers. At six weeks, 90 percent of these patients are able to walk up and down the stairs. Some people who’ve had Microplasty may even participate in activities such as golf as early as six to twelve weeks after surgery.

Patients undergoing traditional knee replacement surgery may not expect to walk without assistance until four to eight weeks after surgery.

Independent approval

In medicine, the true test of a tool or technique’s value is not how one patient fared following treatment. Rather, outcomes are measured across a pool of patients. CareScience, an independent company that specializes in evaluating clinical treatment outcomes, recently recognized St. Vincent Carmel Hospital, and Drs. Johnson and Czarkowski, as having one of the top performances among 39 nationwide facilities in overall quality and efficiency outcomes for the Total Knee Replacement Program.

Performance was measured by the incidence of three adverse outcomes: mortality, morbidity and complications. Efficiency was measured by length of hospital stay following the procedure.

So what does that mean to patients?

“As a patient, you want to know you are dealing with a surgeon who has demonstrated the ability to perform quality procedures with excellent outcomes,” Dr. Johnson said.

If you are considering knee replacement surgery and would like to learn if you are a candidate for Rapid Recovery Microplasty, please call St. Vincent Sports Medicine at (317) 573-7529 or (317) 338-CARE.



Rapid Recovery Microplasty™ Incision



Traditional Incision