

**Mr Stephen Milner** DM FRCS (Tr & Orth)  
Consultant Trauma, Orthopaedic and Foot & Ankle Surgeon  
Email: [steve.milner@nhs.net](mailto:steve.milner@nhs.net)

Secretary: Marilyn Wayman  
01332 783057 (direct dial)  
Email: [marilyn.wayman@derbyhospitals.nhs.uk](mailto:marilyn.wayman@derbyhospitals.nhs.uk)

# OS02lite Total Knee Replacement

Expires end of December 2012  
Issued December 2011

You can get more information and share your experience at [www.aboutmyhealth.org](http://www.aboutmyhealth.org)  
Tell us how useful you found this document at [www.patientfeedback.org](http://www.patientfeedback.org)



[www.rcseng.ac.uk](http://www.rcseng.ac.uk)

[www.rcsed.ac.uk](http://www.rcsed.ac.uk)



This document will give you information about total knee replacement. If you have any questions, you should ask your GP or other relevant health professional.

### What is arthritis?

Arthritis is a group of conditions that cause damage to one or more joints.

The most common type of arthritis is osteoarthritis, where there is gradual wear and tear of a joint. Some other types of arthritis are associated with inflammation of the joints.

Arthritis eventually wears away the normal cartilage covering the surface of the joint and the bone underneath becomes damaged. This causes pain and stiffness in the joint.

### What are the benefits of surgery?

If your knee replacement is successful, you should have less pain and be able to walk more easily.

### Are there any alternatives to a total knee replacement?

Simple painkillers such as paracetamol and anti-inflammatory painkillers such as ibuprofen can help control the pain. Supplements to your diet may also help relieve your symptoms. You should check with your doctor before you take supplements.

Using a walking stick can make walking easier. Wearing an elasticated support on your knee can help it feel stronger.

Regular moderate exercise can help to reduce stiffness in your knee.

A steroid injection into your knee joint can sometimes reduce pain and stiffness.

All these measures become less effective as your arthritis gets worse.

### What does the operation involve?

A variety of anaesthetic techniques is possible. The operation usually takes between an hour and an hour and a half.

Your surgeon will make a cut on the front of your knee and remove the damaged joint surfaces. They will replace these with an artificial knee joint made of metal, plastic or ceramic, or a combination of these materials (see figure 1).

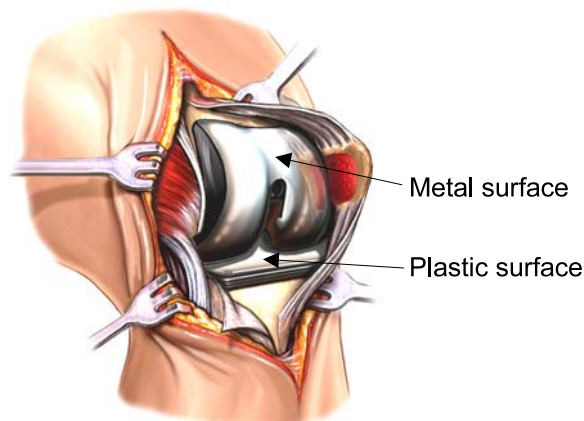


Figure 1

Typical knee replacement joint

Acrylic cement or special coatings on the knee replacement bond it directly to the bone.

### What complications can happen?

#### 1 General complications

- Pain
- Bleeding
- Infection of the surgical site (wound)
- Unsightly scarring
- Blood clots
- Difficulty passing urine
- Chest infection
- Heart attack
- Stroke

#### 2 Specific complications

- Damage to nerves
- Damage to blood vessels
- Infection in the knee
- Loosening
- Continued discomfort in the knee
- Severe pain, stiffness and loss of use of the knee (complex regional pain syndrome)

### How soon will I recover?

You should be able to go home after three to seven days.

You will need to use crutches or walking sticks for a few weeks.

Regular exercise should help you to return to normal activities as soon as possible. Before you start exercising, you should ask a member of the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

Most people make a good recovery, have less pain and can move about better. An artificial knee is never quite the same as a normal knee. Kneeling down is not recommended and is usually uncomfortable.

A knee replacement can wear out with time.

## **Summary**

In a few cases, arthritis of the knee is the result of a previous knee injury or rheumatoid arthritis. Usually it happens without a known cause. If you suffer severe pain, stiffness and disability, a knee replacement should reduce your pain and help you walk more easily.

## **Acknowledgements**

Author: Mr Stephen Milner DM FRCS (Tr. & Orth.)

Illustrations: Mr Stephen Milner DM FRCS (Tr. & Orth.)

**This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you.**