

Knee, Hip Replacement Patients Recover Faster With Minimally Invasive Surgery

Seven years ago Daniel Pina had traditional total knee replacement surgery, and it took him months to recover. In February, his wife, Marina, had her left knee replaced using a new, minimally invasive procedure, and her post-op experience was quite different.

“I didn’t have any pain, and I was walking around shortly after surgery,” said the 61-year-old Mrs. Pina, of Chicago.

A patient of orthopedic surgeon Jeffrey Meisles, MD, Marina is one of his many total knee and hip replacement patients who have benefited from minimally invasive alternatives that make surgery, recovery and rehabilitation faster and easier.

Dr. Meisles is one of the few surgeons in the Chicago area performing minimally invasive total knee replacements.

“This is a big advance in orthopedics and a big advantage for patients,” Dr. Meisles said. “We use the same clinically proven implants used in traditional surgery. It’s the technique that has been improved—use of better instrumentation and advanced surgical skills.”

In traditional surgery, a 12-inch incision is made down the front of the knee, and the tendon and quadriceps muscle, which control the bending of the knee, are cut. In the minimally invasive procedure, a 3- to 5-inch incision is made on the side of the knee, and the tendon and “quad” muscle are separated rather than cut.

“We create a surgical window and move the window to the area we’re working on rather than exposing the whole joint,” Dr. Meisles said. With less trauma to soft tissues around the joint, patients tend to recover quicker.

He said this type of surgery can be done on almost all patients, with the exception of some who have certain types of severe deformities.

Ron Parry, 49, of Elgin, is another patient singing the praises of this procedure. “I was up and walking the same night as my surgery. I feel great, much better than I expected,” Parry said as he was preparing to go home the third day after his operation.

Before surgery, Parry could only bend his knee 45 degrees. (A healthy knee can bend about 135 degrees.) . It was getting more and more painful for him to walk, and stairs were almost impossible. “If I went up stairs I had to lift my knee out and up, I couldn’t bend it.”

Two days after surgery, Parry was already bending his knee 90 degrees. Two weeks after the operation, he had improved to 103 degrees. “With the traditional surgery, it usually takes a patient two weeks to achieve the improvement in motion that Ron reached in just

two days,” said Dr. Meisles, adding that with this type of prosthesis, a patient can typically get back to a 125-degree bend.

“I am so grateful to Dr. Meisles,” Parry said. “I’m really looking forward to being able to ride a bike again.”

Another patient, **Frank Scarpelli, 85, of Melrose Park**, had his right knee replaced on February 17 and will have his left one done in the fall.

“I was surprised at how fast I was back on my feet,” Scarpelli said. “Others I’ve known who have had their knees replaced were laid up for a lot longer.

“Before surgery, I needed to use a walker and had a real tough time getting around (he has two sets of stairs inside his house and several steps down from the front porch),” he said. “Now I can go up and down stairs pretty well, and I can drive again,” said Scarpelli, a car buff who bought a new Cadillac before his surgery.

Dr. Meisles has also been doing minimally invasive hip replacement procedures for about a year. It utilizes techniques similar to the knee procedure, but the length of the incision is more dependent on the size of the patient. Traditional hip replacement surgery requires an incision about 8 inches long, whereas the minimally invasive procedure would only require an incision of about 3 inches on a thin person, he said, adding that the minimally invasive approach cannot be done on patients who are severely overweight.

Carolyn Stallings, 60, of Maywood, had her right hip replaced on January 13. “So many people couldn’t believe how quickly I was up,” she said. “By the third day after the operation I was walking without assistance. I can only say wonderful, positive things about the minimally invasive surgery.”

Dr. Meisles said he has several patients who have had a traditional hip replacement on one side and then had the minimally invasive procedure on the other side. “After the newer procedure, they all seem to experience less pain and they tend to be on their feet and moving around sooner,” he said.