



# Preparing for your total knee replacement

THE  
physio  
CO

keeping seniors moving

## Introduction

If knee pain is stopping you from doing what you love, you might be preparing for a total knee replacement.

A total knee replacement is an operation that can reduce pain and improve independence. It replaces the old worn-out bone with an artificial implant to help restore knee function.

While everyone is different, the majority of people will undergo this procedure after other treatments have failed to manage their pain.



*Did you know The Physio Co provides online physio consultations along with home visits?*

Total knee replacements happen all the time.

You won't be alone through this journey. You will have a team of experts to help you on your way and that can include a caring member of our team at The Physio Co.

Keep reading to understand:

- The reasons for total knee replacements
- How to get ready for the procedure
- What the operation involves
- What to expect following the surgery
- How to work with your physio

### From the TPC team

**The Physio Co** provides physiotherapy for older Australians, please call 1300 797 793 or email [hello@thephysioco.com.au](mailto:hello@thephysioco.com.au)

## Why you might need a total knee replacement (TKR)

Knee replacements are not a one-size-fits-all approach, and each person's experience and need for a replacement will vary. The ultimate goal is to help you feel like yourself again, without limitations.

### Reasons for a TKR:

- Chronic pain: Your pain may have progressively become worse over time
- To avoid loss of independence and cutting back on the things you love
- When other treatments fail

### Aims of TKR surgery:

- Reduce pain
- Restore movement to the joint
- Increase overall function
- Improve your quality of life

### Common conditions requiring TKR:

- Osteoarthritis
- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Trauma /Injury

### Fast Fact:

Between September 1999 and December 2018, there have been 717,334 total knee replacements performed in Australia!

## Meet your knee

The average Australian takes around 2.5 million steps each year, which can be a lot of stress on our body over time!

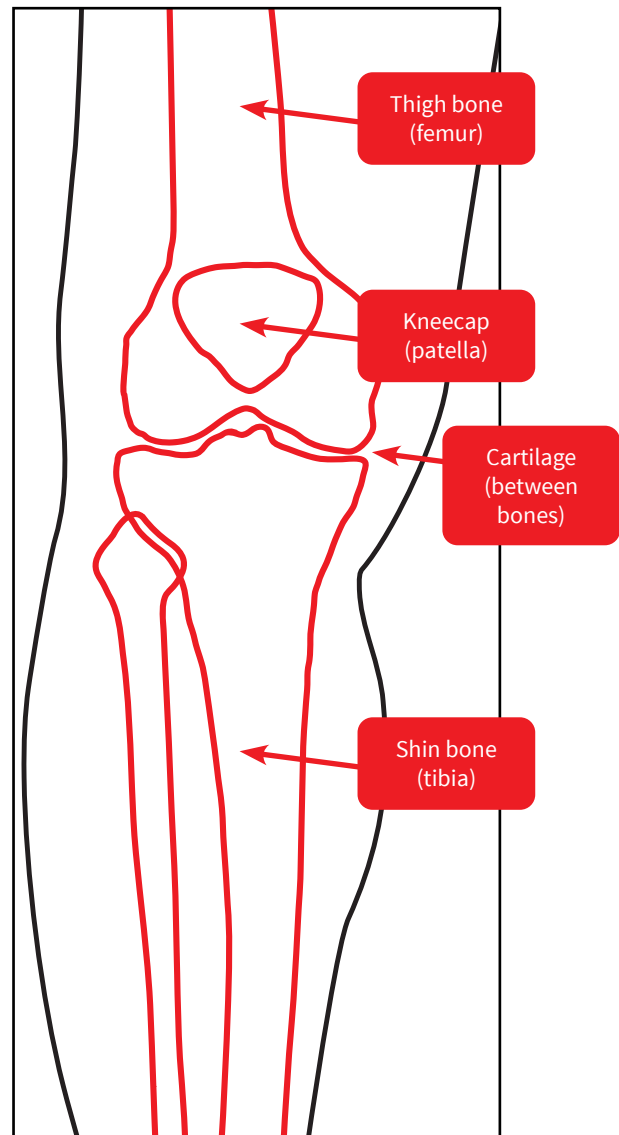
The knee is a strong joint, but as we age, wear and tear of the structures in the knee can lead to pain. It's excellent to understand the structures around your knee so that you know what we are talking about come rehab time!

The knee has a few main elements:

1. Bones
2. Cartilage
3. Muscles

### Fast Fact:

Similar to fingerprints, no two individuals have the same kneecap structure; we all have unique kneecaps!



## Starting your TKR journey

The first step in your journey towards a total knee replacement will be an assessment by an orthopaedic surgeon.

Things to know:

- A GP referral is required to see an orthopaedic surgeon.
- The surgeon will assess your medical history.
- Depending on the reason for a possible TKR, scans and tests are typically done before the first appointment. This might require an X-ray, ultrasound, MRI or CT scan.
- Assessment is made of the movement

of the knee and your restrictions

- Non-surgery will be suggested first if you haven't already tried this, such as:
  - medications
  - injections
  - braces
  - physiotherapy
- The surgeon may then recommend a total knee replacement – you will have time to think about the surgery before booking it in!

### Fast Fact:

The first total knee replacement was pioneered by Leslie Gordon Percival Shiers (FRCS) in 1954





## Before the operation (prehab)

Most people have heard of 'rehab', but 'prehab' is just as important.

Prehab is the preparation, and ideally you start this 6 weeks out.

The hard work you put in before the operation, such as riding the exercise bike or taking brisk walks - will speed up your recovery.

### **The aim of prehab is to prepare**

The stronger the muscles around your knee are before surgery, the quicker you will recover, and the better the quality of your recovery.

The Physio Co team can help with your prehab. Ask us how!



## Counting down to the operation

Leading up to your surgery, you might have mixed feelings. You may feel excited about the thought of less pain, but also nervous about your operation.

Here are a few pointers to help you prepare:

- Work with a physio in your 6-week prehab period
- Within the last 24 hours before your operation:
  - Follow instructions from your surgeon
  - Do not shave the area of surgery. If shaving needs to occur, this will happen during surgery
  - Remove all nail polish and make-up
  - Remove all jewellery.
- Make sure there is someone available to bring you home from the hospital and help for a couple of days once you get home
- Ensure your home is clutter-free and place items you use often within arm's reach
- If you live in a multi-level house, it's good to prepare a bed and space on the ground floor so you can avoid stairs



## Day of the operation

The big day has arrived! Soon you'll be ready to go into the operating theatre. Here's what will happen:

1. The nurses and anaesthesia team will get you set for surgery
2. Your surgeon will remove the worn joint surfaces of the thigh and/or shin bones.
3. Sometimes the patella (kneecap) is also removed.



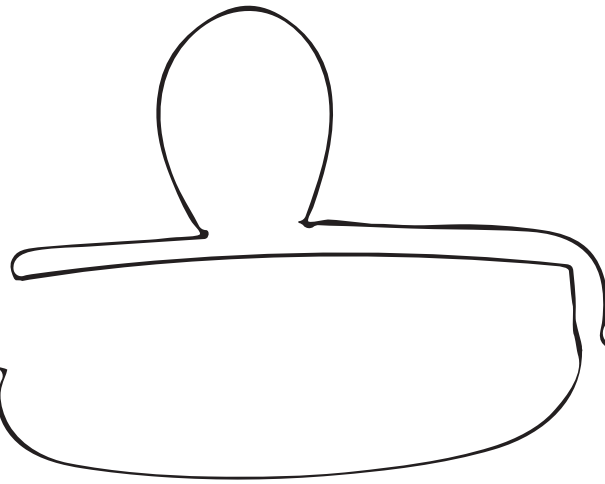
The surgeon will replace your knee joint with implants.

The size and location of the incision/scar is likely to be from 5-10cm, at the side or front of your knee.

### Fast Fact:

Total knee replacement is considered one of the safest and most effective procedures in orthopaedics.





## What to expect after surgery

Your rehab starts as soon as you wake up. It is an exciting time, and the hospital team will be with you every step of the way.

- Your knee will be bandaged and elevated when you wake up after surgery.
- You may be asked to wear compression socks to improve blood circulation in your legs and reduce the likelihood of clots.
- Regular medication will help manage your pain
- Expect to stay in hospital for 2-4 days (your surgeon will give you better guidance).

### Main aim

Getting your pain and swelling under control and preparing to go home are the first steps in recovery.

### Within the first 6 weeks

Your surgeon will want to see the following progress:

- reduced swelling
- bend your knee enough to sit safely
- completely straighten your knee
- strongly activate your thigh muscles to take the weight of your body

## During your hospital stay

- A physio will visit you every day
- Early mobilisation is essential – you will be up walking on day one with a walking aid
- You will be guided to complete range of motion and strengthening exercises.
- You will apply a compression bandage and ice every two hours.
- An occupational therapist (OT) will talk to you about being safe once you get home.
- Each day you will progress walking distance and ability.
- Your physio and OT will want to see you safely manage crutches before discharge from hospital.

## What to expect during rehabilitation

Rehab is where we get down to business; from this point it's all up to you (and some help from your physio!). Your commitment to your rehab plan will determine how quickly you recover.

- ▶ You will need to complete your exercise 2-3 times a day.
- ▶ Continue pain relief as prescribed by your doctor or surgeon – it's important your pain is managed effectively so you can complete your exercises.
- ▶ Your rehabilitation may include:
  - Physio for at least the first two months
  - Hydrotherapy
  - Group exercise class
  - Stationary cycling
  - Walking.
- ▶ Your rehab plan is likely to continue for 12 weeks or longer.
- ▶ Everyone recovers a little differently. It takes six months to a year to get back to full strength.

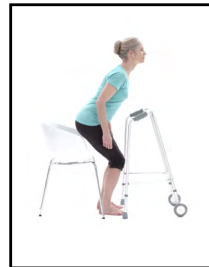
### Rehab exercises might include:



Gentle leg lifts



Knee bends



Mini squats



Standing hip swings

Image credit: [physitrack.com](https://www.physitrack.com)

## The final stretch (with a little help from your physio)

The purpose of your total knee replacement is to get you back to living life to the fullest, without limitations.

Before setting on your TKR journey you would've had your own reasons for committing to surgery. It's important to keep these in mind as you progress through rehab. Focusing on goals that are meaningful to you will keep you motivated.

Some examples of goals from our clients to give you inspiration:

- to be able to play with my grandchildren on the floor
- to climb the stairs without trouble when I visit my brother in Ireland
- to walk to the local café for coffee with my husband, without pain
- to get back to playing golf twice a week

At **The Physio Co**, we can help you to set a meaningful goal, make a plan to achieve that goal and most importantly, celebrate when you smash the goal you've worked so hard to achieve!



**Please give us a call on  
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[hello@thephysioco.com.au](mailto:hello@thephysioco.com.au)**

## Shopping list:

Below is a list of equipment that might help speed up your recovery. Please speak to your surgeon and physio for the definitive list.

- Small pillow to go under knee**
- Compression brace/bandage**
- Large ice pack x 2**
- Towel**  
Long enough so that you can hold onto the towel while it wraps under your foot when your leg is straight
- Ankle weights**
- Resistance bands**  
(Yellow, green & red)

## That's it!

If you have a question or would like the help of a physio that knows total knee replacements, please book a time with our team

**Please give us a call on  
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**[www.thephysioco.com.au](http://www.thephysioco.com.au)**  
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**Resources used:**

<https://aoanjrr.sahmri.com/documents/10180/576950/Hip%2C%20Knee%20%26%20Shoulder%20Arthroplasty>

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**Westby MD, Kennedy D, Jones D, Jones A, Doyle Y, Waters MM, Backman C.** Post-acute physiotherapy for primary total knee arthroplasty (Protocol). Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2008, Issue 2.