

Partial Knee Replacement Q & A

What is a partial knee replacement?

Partial knee replacement is an orthopaedic surgery to remove damaged or degenerated parts of your knee joint and replace them with biocompatible metal or plastic components. In many cases, our surgeons at Ascension Michigan Orthopaedics-Rochester provide partial knee replacement as an outpatient procedure. When possible, they use minimally invasive surgical techniques.

Am I a good candidate for partial knee replacement?

Before recommending any surgery, your doctor will provide a detailed physical exam, including X-rays, MRIs, and lab tests, to assess the condition of your knee. They may also use arthroscopy to examine the inside of your knee joint in detail. They look for signs that your damaged or degenerated tissue is only in one part of your knee. For example, your pain is located on one side of your knee.

What happens during a partial knee replacement?

While a partial knee replacement is often a minimally invasive outpatient procedure, our team will provide you with general anesthesia so you can sleep comfortably through your surgery. During the operation, your doctor will make an incision to access your knee and inspect your bones, cartilage, and ligaments. Then, he and the team remove the damaged cartilage and a small layer of the underlying bone. They position the implants over the damaged parts of your joint and cement them into place to re-create the smooth surface of your joint. Finally, they place a spacer between the metal surfaces to create a frictionless gliding surface.

What should I expect after a partial knee replacement?

In most cases, you can go home when you recover from anesthesia. You will need a friend or family member to drive you home as anesthesia can interfere with your ability to operate machinery, and your knee may be too sore to drive. Your surgeon gives you customized aftercare instructions before releasing you.

Most patients recover from partial knee replacement surgery relatively quickly. The incisions and implants are smaller and you still have part of your natural joint, which provides a more normal feeling that helps you feel comfortable getting back to your regular activities. You may need some medication for pain management. Additionally, physical therapy is critical to rebuilding strength and flexibility around your knee.