

SPORTS MEDICINE

Dr. William J. Bryan

Joint replacements give new life to arthritis victims

More than a few patients have told me they have to give up playing golf because of severe arthritis in a knee or hip. Arthritis can spell the end of a person's golf game because chronic pain makes it difficult to turn quickly enough to get enough force through the ball.

In fact, one guy told me he would rather stop playing than take a ribbing from his buddies because he can only hit 100-yard tee shots.

But you don't have to put the clubs away for good if you have arthritis. I have seen many patients with total joint replacements return to the course just a few weeks after surgery.

Arthritis of the hip causes cartilage between the femoral head and the acetabulum to wear away, causing two bones to scrape against each other, bone on bone. This causes the joint to become uneven and erode, which results

in pain, stiffness and instability. A total hip replacement involves removing diseased parts of the hip joint, the hip socket and the ball and replacing them with artificial parts. I believe hip replacements are so good nowadays that I confidently tell patients that they will last up to 25 years.

A new procedure called hip resurfacing is good for persons age 50 and younger who eventually will need a total hip replacement, but who want to remain active as long as they can. This procedure involves placing a metal covering over the ball of the hip joint rather than completely replacing it, thus helping a person retain more bone than a total hip replacement and giving them more of an athletic hip.

When it comes to the knee, a partial knee replacement is an option for those who have tried conservative treat-



ments such as cortisone injections, strengthening exercises or braces and have not gotten any better. It involves removing only the damaged areas of cartilage and replacing these surfaces, instead of removing all of the cartilage and replacing it with a metal or plastic implant. The catch is you have to have your ligaments intact, especially the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL). Both partial knee and total knee replacements are scientific breakthroughs that offer a person more normal function.

It's important to talk with your doctor and physical therapist to find out what you can do to get your body ready to play 18 holes. I recommend working on your short game the first month after surgery and strength conditioning the second month. Working on the little things will not only help your game, but also build your self-confidence.

Every year I join forces with the Arthritis Foundation for the Joints in Action golf tournament to celebrate the large number of people who are getting back on the course after having a total joint replacement. This year's tournament takes place at Redstone Golf Club on Oct. 11.

If you show up with a total joint replacement, you receive a handicap stroke for every artificial joint you have. Not a bad deal. You also will receive a Life Saver and you can tee it up anywhere on the course using the piece of candy. A friend of mine did this once when he had a wrist injury to give himself a better lie and I thought it was a great idea.

If you want more information about the tournament, call Kim Jessup at 713-942-9063. I look forward to seeing you at Redstone once again enjoying the great game of golf. . . pain free. **HL**

ABOUT DR. BILL BRYAN

Dr. Bill Bryan's expertise in orthopedic surgery ranges from arthroscopic shoulder surgery to applications of emerging surgical solutions for middle-age knee problems. He has served as a consultant to industries investigating advances in partial and total knee replacements and is also a PGA consulting physician.

Dr. Bryan served as the Houston Astros medical director from 1983 to 2003. During this time, he was president of Major League Baseball's Physician Association and gave numerous presentations concerning the surgical and non-surgical care of adult throwing injuries. He has worked with many local baseball figures to build a national, quality player evaluation, injury treatment and condition center. Dr. Bryan is a members of some of the most prestigious

professional associations in the medical field.

Dr. Bryan is also a physician consultant for Physiotherapy Associates, the Official Healthcare Provider for the PGA, LPGA and the Champions Tour.

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