

Improving condition may **bypass knee surgery** altogether

**Gel shot, diet and exercise changes
reduce weight and relieve knee pain**



Deborah had struggled with osteoarthritis in her knee, and two orthopedic surgeons had recommended total knee replacement surgery. Osteoarthritis is a painful, degenerative condition that can reduce mobility and make daily tasks difficult to manage. "My knee hurt so bad that I could stand for maybe five or 10 minutes," she says. "I was always looking for somewhere to sit."

Deborah works at home as a universal senior customer service analyst for Cigna Dental. "I sit a lot when I work," she says. That exacerbated the problem. She was overweight, and not getting exercise. With the prospect of knee surgery looming, "I thought I was too far gone," she says. "I was scared to death."

But luckily, her primary orthopedic surgeon views surgery as a last resort, and when she was tested at the hospital, her blood sugar level was elevated. Her surgeon sent her to another doctor, who prescribed two pills per day to lower her blood sugar.

Around this time, Deborah received a call from ConsumerMedical offering help, as her claims history indicated her ongoing knee problems. Deborah was more than happy to speak with the Nurse Ally, as she previously learned that she was required to have a consultation with ConsumerMedical before undergoing surgery in order to avoid \$1,000 out-of-pocket costs.

Knee Osteoarthritis

Osteoarthritis is a painful, degenerative condition that can reduce mobility and make daily tasks difficult to manage. An orthopedic surgeon may recommend partial or total knee replacement, a surgical procedure to resurface a knee damaged by arthritis using metal and plastic parts to cap the ends of bones that form the knee joint. Common non-surgical treatments are cortisone shots or gel injections to reduce the pain and supplement the fluid in the knee to help lubricate and cushion the joint.

"Since I've been losing the weight, I am not feeling the knee pain, and I'm not taking pain pills anymore. I'm more active than I've been in a whole year, and I couldn't be happier."

Deborah reviewed her medical history with the Nurse Ally. She already had two rounds of cortisone injections in her knee, but the pain relief only lasted two to three weeks each time. Deborah told the Nurse Ally she was very scared to have surgery. The Nurse Ally discussed gel injections (injecting hydraulic acid into the knee joint) as another non-surgical treatment option. After the call, ConsumerMedical sent Deborah information on gel injections, her diagnosis and treatment options, risks and benefits, and questions to ask the doctor.

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Deborah read all the information and reviewed it by phone with her Nurse Ally. She felt comfortable requesting the gel injection, and her orthopedic surgeon worked with Cigna to get the treatment approved. "It did give me relief and it actually helped," says Deborah.

In subsequent calls with the Nurse Ally, they discussed her doctor's recommendation that she lose weight, which should also help reduce her knee pain. "I've changed my diet drastically," says Deborah. "When you take away the pasta and bread and potatoes, along with taking the medication for sugar, you're going to drop weight." She also increased her activity level. "I make sure to take walks on my breaks. I work at home, so I walk around the house ... I walk outside ... I'm doing a lot more than I used to a year ago."

"I felt good that my Nurse Ally cared enough to follow up to make sure that I got the material, and that I read it, too. I really felt good about the help I received."

The changes made a huge difference. "I've already lost over 25 pounds and I'm looking forward to losing the next 25," she says. "I hate taking pills, and I've had to take two pills a day to lower my sugar level. The doctor said if I keep up the healthier eating and exercise, and lose more weight, I can drop to one pill a day. Then we can evaluate again in a few months, and I may be able to drop the other pill. I was thrilled."

Deborah is working hard to avoid surgery. "Since I've been losing the weight, I am not feeling the knee pain, and I'm not taking pain pills anymore. Before I talked to ConsumerMedical, I was taking pain pills regularly. I'm more active than I've been in a whole year, and I couldn't be happier."

Reflecting on her experience with ConsumerMedical, "I really felt I was being helped," says Deborah. "I didn't feel pressured to either do surgery or not do surgery. I was encouraged to make sure that I was informed on every aspect, on every level. The Nurse Ally said, 'You'll feel 100 percent better if you're informed before making a big decision like surgery.' I felt good that she cared enough to follow up to make sure that I got the material, and that I read it, too. I really felt good about the help I received."

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