



**MR ELLIS PATIENT INFORMATION  
FOR INFORMED CONSENT**

**OXFORD UNICOMPARTMENTAL KNEE  
REPLACEMENT  
( half knee replacement)**

**PROCEDURE:** The knee is an important hinge joint and as it is weight-bearing can be prone to “wearing out”. Arthritis is painful and disabling and you and Mr Ellis and you have decided that a half knee replacement may be your best option. Like the tread of car tyre, in some patients only one half of the knee becomes worn. If the rest of the knee is still healthy, Mr Ellis may suggest having just a half knee replacement. The benefits of this are that the half knee replacement is intended to keep the healthy knee structures, and is intended to restore normal knee motion and function. You may of course go on to have a total knee replacement in the future.

A Unicompartmental knee replacement is a surgical procedure, in which the injured or damaged running surfaces of the knee are replaced with artificial parts which are secured to the bone.

If you have **any X-rays** of your own please remember to **bring them with you** to the hospital.

You will be seen by Mr Ellis before the operation. He will take this opportunity to draw (mark with a felt pen) on your leg. This is to make sure the correct leg is operated on. If you have any further questions, this might be a good time to ask them.

An anaesthetic will be administered in theatre. This is usually a spinal anesthetic (e.g. where you are awake but the area to be operated is completely numbed) or may be a general anaesthetic (where you will be asleep). You must discuss this with the anaesthetist who will see you before your surgery.

A tight inflatable band (a tourniquet) will be placed across the top of the thigh to limit the bleeding. Your skin will be cleaned with anti-septic solution and covered with clean towels (drapes). Mr Ellis will make a cut (an incision) down the affected side of the knee. The knee capsule (the tough, gristle-like tissue around the knee) which is then visible can be cut. From here, Mr Ellis can trim the ends of the thigh bone (femur) and leg bone (tibia) using a special bone saw.

Using measuring devices, the new artificial knee joint is fitted into position. The implants have an outer alloy metal casing with a “polyethylene” bearing which sits on the tibia. The components are usually cementless.



When Mr Ellis is happy with the position and movements of the knee, the tissue and skin will be closed with clips after insertion of local anaesthetic and analgesics to accelerate your recovery. The clips will need to be removed after the operation and an appointment will be provided for this.

When you wake up, you will have a padded bandage around the knee. If you are in pain, please ask for pain killers.

You will go for an X-ray the day after the operation and will be encouraged to stand and start walking.

You will be visited by the physiotherapy team, who will suggest exercises for you. It is important to do these (as pain allows).

**ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURE:** Knee replacements are usually performed on patients suffering from severe arthritis (although there are other reasons). Most patients are above the age of 55yrs.

Other alternatives include – Losing weight,  
stopping strenuous exercises or work,  
Physiotherapy and gentle exercises,  
Medicines, such as anti-inflammatory drugs (e.g.  
ibuprofen or steroids),  
Using a stick or a crutch,  
Using a knee brace,  
Arthroscopy  
Cartilage transplant,  
Total knee replacement

Some of the above are not appropriate if you want to regain as much physical activity as possible, but you should discuss all possibilities with Mr Ellis.

## RISKS

As with all procedures, this carries some risks and complications.

### **COMMON:** (2-5%)

Pain: the knee will be sore after the operation. If you are in pain, it's important to tell staff so that medicines can be given. Pain will improve with time. In rare cases, the replaced knee may ache for many months. Rarely, pain will be a chronic problem. This may be due to any of the other complications listed below, or sometimes, for no obvious reason.

Bleeding: A blood transfusion or iron tablets may occasionally be required. The bleeding may form a blood clot or large bruise within the knee joint which may become painful require an operation to remove it.



Blood clots: DVT (deep vein thrombosis) is a blood clot in a vein. The risks of developing a DVT are greater after any surgery (and especially bone). DVT can pass in the blood stream and be deposited in the lungs (a pulmonary embolism – PE). This is a very serious condition which affects your breathing. Mr Ellis will follow the NICE guidelines to limit the risk of DVTs from forming. Some centres will also ask you to wear stockings on your legs, while others may use foot pumps to keep blood circulating around the leg. Starting to walk and moving early is one of the best ways to prevent blood clots from forming.

Knee stiffness: may occur after the operation, especially if the knee is stiff before the op. Manipulation of the joint (under general anaesthetic) may be necessary.

Conversion to a Total Knee replacement: if the other parts of the knee look arthritic, Mr Ellis may decide to proceed to a total replacement.

Prosthesis wear: Modern operating techniques and new implants mean knee implants can last for many years. In some cases, they fail earlier. The reason is often unknown. The plastic bearing is most commonly worn away.

## **LESS COMMON:** (1-2%)

Infection: You will be given antibiotics just before and after the operation and the procedure will also be performed in sterile conditions (theatre) with sterile equipment. Despite this infections still occur (1 to 2%). The wound site may become red, hot and painful. There may also be a discharge of fluid or pus. This is usually treated with antibiotics, and an operation to washout the joint may be necessary. In rare cases, the prostheses may be removed and replaced at a later date. The infection can sometimes lead to sepsis (blood infection) and strong antibiotics are required.

## **RARE:** (<1%)

Pulmonary Embolism: this (a PE) is a blood clot that has travelled to the lungs. This can seriously affect your breathing and can be fatal.

Altered wound healing: the wound may become red, thickened and painful (keloid scar) especially in Afro-Caribbean.

Nerve Damage: efforts are made to prevent this, however damage to the small nerves around the knee is a risk. This may cause temporary or permanent altered sensation around the knee.

Bone Damage: the thigh bone may be broken when the prosthesis (false joint) is inserted. This may require fixation, either at time or at a later operation.

Blood vessel damage: the vessels at the back of the knee may rarely be damaged. This may require further surgery by the vascular surgeons.

Death: Death is a rare occurrence from joint surgery but may be due many of those listed above.