

Hip replacement surgeries put an end to patient's constant pain

March 10 2014, by Jim Ritter



Following successful surgeries to replace his hips, William Lawrence is able to experience the joys and benefits of brisk walking in a forest preserve.

William Lawrence, a 74-year-old Maywood resident, is familiar with discomfort and pain. In his youth, William enjoyed playing football and basketball. He served in the military for three years and he worked for two decades in a warehouse on concrete floors. These activities might have contributed to the pain in his knees that led to surgeries in both joints 16 years ago.

Yes, William knows pain. Yet after his knee operations, William was feeling better – for a while.

"For about eight years my hips had been getting worse and worse," William remembered. "Eventually I was in constant pain that was so bad it would wake me up at night. Both my hips hurt, but the right one was the worst."

Doctors at a local hospital prescribed pain medication, but William felt it wasn't working. One of his daughters, a registered nurse, asked him to meet with a surgeon at Gottlieb Memorial Hospital.

"The doctor explained different options that could help me. I chose total [hip replacement](#)," William said. "He said it's not a simple operation to get a new hip.

The doctor went over the risks and also the benefits of total [replacement surgery](#), and he helped me understand what to expect. I appreciated how he described everything to me."

The doctor about whom William speaks with respect and gratitude is Gottlieb's Paul Prinz, MD, Orthopaedic Surgery. Dr. Prinz performed [total joint replacement](#) surgery on William's right hip in May 2012, and on his left hip four months later. Dr. Prinz believes that while the technical expertise of the surgical team is important, it's also critical to communicate effectively, and with compassion.

"Many patients have a fear of the unknown," Dr. Prinz said. "They don't know what to expect when they arrive at Gottlieb, what will take place as during their hospital stay, and what they should anticipate after discharge."

"Sometimes there is fear about the prosthesis (artificial joint) that we use. When I explain that we have a very good track record with knee, hip and shoulder surgeries, and that the combination of an excellent surgical team, high-quality prostheses and great nurses leads to very low infection

and complication rates, patients and their families become more comfortable with the entire process."

During a total [hip replacement surgery](#) (arthroplasty), the surgeon removes diseased or injured parts of the hip joint and replaces them with artificial material designed to last for many years. Most patients experience increased mobility and joint function with a significant reduction in pain.

Dr. Prinz, his Gottlieb colleagues and other orthopaedic surgeons usually reserve total hip replacement surgery for older patients. For people in their 40s and 50s, physicians often recommend other ways to alleviate [hip pain](#).

"Our first approach to treatment is not surgical," Dr. Prinz explained. "We try anti-inflammatory medications and suggest modifications to the person's activities. Joint replacement can be life-changing in a positive way, but it's a last resort."

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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