



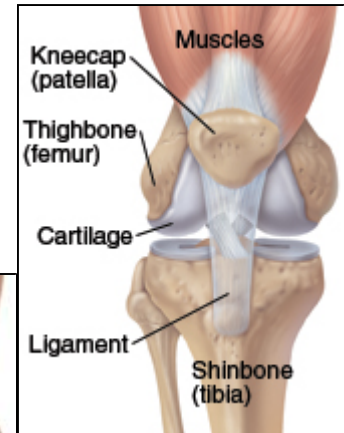
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Understanding Knee Replacement

The knee is a hingelike joint, formed where the thighbone, shinbone, and kneecap meet. It is supported by muscles and ligaments and lined with cushioning cartilage. Over time, cartilage can wear away. As it does, the knee becomes stiff and painful. A knee **prosthesis** (artificial joint) can replace the painful joint and restore movement.

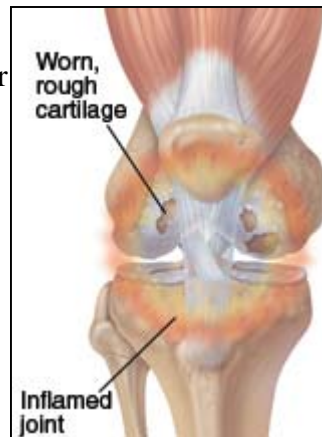
A Healthy Knee

A healthy knee joint bends easily. Cartilage, a smooth tissue, covers the ends of the thighbone and shinbone and the underside of the kneecap. Healthy cartilage absorbs stress and allows the bones to glide freely over each other. Joint fluid lubricates the cartilage surfaces, making movement even easier.



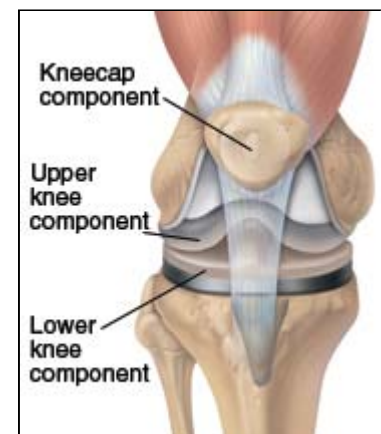
A Problem Knee

A problem knee is stiff or painful. Cartilage cracks or wears away due to usage, inflammation, or injury. Worn, roughened cartilage no longer allows the joint to glide freely, so it feels stiff. As more cartilage wears away, exposed bones rub together when the knee bends, causing pain. With time, bone surfaces also become rough, making pain worse.



A Knee Prosthesis

A knee prosthesis lets your knee bend easily again. The roughened ends of the thighbone and shinbone and the underside of the kneecap are replaced with metal and strong plastic components. With new smooth surfaces, the bones can once again glide freely. A knee prosthesis does have limitations. But it can let you walk and move with greater comfort.



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