



Dr. Steven B. Jackson is a fellowship-trained orthopaedic surgeon and a member of Western Reserve Hospital Physicians Inc. Orthopaedics with locations in Akron and Hudson, Ohio.

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Orthopaedic Surgery — the Last Option?



ONE IN SEVEN Americans suffers an orthopaedic impairment and more than 7 million require hospitalization, according to the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS). Patients with chronic knee, back and shoulder pain are often referred to an orthopaedic surgeon, and often they assume that surgery is inevitable. But surgery is not the only option. Just ask Steven B. Jackson, DO. Dr. Jackson is a fellowship-trained orthopaedic surgeon and a member of Western Reserve Hospital Physicians Inc. Orthopaedics with locations in Akron and Hudson, Ohio.

“The biggest misconception about orthopaedics is that if you’re seeing an orthopaedic surgeon, you have to have surgery. And that’s not always the case,” says Dr. Jackson. “Patients shouldn’t fear being referred to an orthopaedic specialist because there are many things we can do to avoid surgery. Surgery should be the last option.”

REFERRING TO AN ORTHOPAEDIC SURGEON

Patients with musculoskeletal problems typically first visit a primary care physician, who might perform initial evaluations, order imaging studies, and initiate treatments such as anti-inflammatory medication or injection, physical therapy, or chiropractic alternatives. If those measures fail to alleviate symptoms, physicians often refer patients to an orthopaedic surgeon.

“Part of the challenge of being a good orthopaedic surgeon is determining when conservative care is the correct pathway to healing and when surgery is the more appropriate means of treatment,” explains Dr. Jackson. “When you look at the overall numbers of acute injuries that we treat in the office on a daily basis, it’s very small compared to chronic conditions with progressive pain,” explains Dr. Jackson. “Surgery can often be avoided with a bit of conservative treatment and some work on the part of the patient.”

SURGERY VERSES CONSERVATIVE TREATMENT

According to Dr. Jackson, the field of orthopaedics is constantly changing and evolving with new techniques and treatments being researched daily. Currently, the use of anti-inflammatory medications, injections, viscosupplementation, stem cell treatments, over-the-counter supplements, weight reduction, and physical therapy are popular alternatives to surgical treatment.

“A significant number of patients are interested in preserving their joints and wish to have as much conservative treatment as possible prior to considering major joint replacement surgery,” Dr. Jackson says. “For the majority of patients, one or more of these non-surgical options will greatly improve the longevity of their natural joint.”

If pain is not relieved by conservative care, the patient may be a candidate for surgical intervention. When surgery is indicated, it is usually elective and often based on the patient’s pain tolerance and desired lifestyle.

“There has been a significant improvement in surgical techniques,” Dr. Jackson points out. “This often results in decreased hospital stay, shorter recovery and quicker return to activities of daily living.”

In the case of total joint replacement surgery, there have been significant improvements in the materials used, specifically the metal and polyethylene components.

“These improved components have allowed for greater longevity of joint replacements with fewer complications,” explains Dr. Jackson. “There has also been a better understanding of human biomechanics and what is expected of not only our natural joints but the limitations imposed by artificial joints.”

A WELL-ROUNDED PLAN OF CARE

Dr. Jackson believes it is very important to provide a well-rounded plan of care to help the patient restore function to as near normal as possible. That plan often includes work on the part of the patient to improve his or her overall health.

“Obtaining and maintaining an appropriate body mass index and weight really protects your larger joints,” says Dr. Jackson. “Keeping physically fit will prevent a lot of musculoskeletal problems. Having that reserve of being otherwise healthy really helps you recover from surgery or injuries a lot faster.”

For Dr. Jackson, being an orthopaedic surgeon is rewarding. “Whether it is relieving a patient’s symptoms with conservative treatment in the office or providing care through surgery and post-operative recovery, for the majority of patients what we can do as orthopaedic surgeons can significantly change a patient’s life for the better.”

Dr. Steven Jackson sees patients at Western Reserve Hospital Physicians Inc. Orthopaedics at 999 N. Main Street in Akron, Ohio and 5655 Hudson Dr. in Hudson, Ohio. To refer a patient, call 330-650-5110. ■

