

{ IN GOOD HEALTH }

BACK ON TWO FEET

A Middletown woman is walking pain-free again thanks to a pair of total knee replacement surgeries



at Monmouth Medical Center's Joint Replacement Center.



Slowing down is a fact of life as one ages, but Fillippina Nitti didn't expect to be nearly unable to walk before the age of 60. Years of bilateral knee pain were taking a toll on the Middletown resident, and she was running out of solutions to improve her condition.

She had tried many treatments—two knee arthroscopies, lubrication and steroid injections, physical therapy, anti-inflammatory drugs and countless braces—but the pain never subsided.

"I couldn't walk, and I couldn't go around the corner," Nitti recalls. "It was getting debilitating. My oldest son and I had a tradition of going to Comic Con, but I couldn't go anymore because I wasn't able to stand in line."

So, before her 58th birthday, Nitti heeded the advice of her husband, who previously had knee replacement surgery performed at Monmouth Medical Center. He told her to see his surgeon, David Chalnick, M.D., Medical Director of the Joint Replacement Center at MMC.

Nitti told Dr. Chalnick that she was experiencing so much pain and discomfort in both knees while doing daily tasks that it was diminishing her quality of life. He recommended staged bilateral total knee replacement, in which he would perform replacement surgeries on two different dates. Nitti completed a few physical therapy sessions to develop strength, then underwent surgery on her right knee in April 2021. After a day of recovery at MMC, Nitti was back at home—and in awe.

"I was able to fully bend my knee, which I wasn't able to do in previous years," she says. "I was expecting to be in pain after the surgery, but there really wasn't any. It was

amazing, and Dr. Chalnick and the staff were amazing too—they treated me like it was my birthday. That's why I went back."

In February of this year, just after Nitti turned 59, Dr. Chalnick performed total knee replacement surgery on her left knee.

"Staged replacement is fairly common for patients who have bilateral disease and need two replacements," Dr. Chalnick says. "The time between surgeries is variable and depends on what is appropriate for the patient and their schedule. We've done surgeries within a few weeks or several months. We do what's best for each individual patient."

After three months of physical therapy, Nitti was back to living the life she once

enjoyed. "For so long, I would have to climb stairs one step at a time because the pain was so bad," she says. "Now, I'm walking and climbing steps without pain. I'm working on walking more and riding the stationary bike. They were truly life-changing

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Nitti's was one of more than 800 joint replacements performed annually by MMC's Joint Replacement Center, Dr. Chalnick notes. The program is dedicated to the care of knee and hip joint replacement surgery patients, and features a specialized team that uses state-of-the-art technology and techniques.

"We've had disease-specific Joint Replacement Certification since 2009," Dr. Chalnick says. "I'm proud of our program. We work very hard so every patient has a good experience throughout their hospitalization. We have exceptional team members that include nurses, social workers, physical therapists, residents and fellowship-trained surgeons."

Members of the Joint Replacement Program team, from left, Physical Therapist Leilani Toomey, DPT; Nicole Wilps RN, BSN, Assistant Clinical Director and Program Coordinator; Medical Director David Chalnick, M.D., and Christina Connor, BSN-RN-CAPA, are shown in the onsite rehabilitation gym.



For more information about the Joint Replacement Program at Monmouth Medical Center, visit rwjbh.org/mmcjoint.