

A photograph of a woman and a young girl running away from the camera through a snowy field. The woman is on the left, wearing a dark brown puffer jacket, blue jeans, and black boots, with her arms raised high. The girl is on the right, wearing a green puffer jacket, red leggings, brown boots, and a white knit hat with a pom-pom, also with her arms raised. The ground is covered in snow with some dry leaves visible. The background is a bright, hazy winter landscape.

BACK ON THEIR FEET

KNEE REPLACEMENT SURGERY ALLOWS TWO WOMEN TO LIVE THEIR BEST LIVES.

More than 800 knee and hip replacement surgeries are performed each year at the Joint Replacement Center at Monmouth Medical Center (MMC), where a specialized team uses state-of-the-art surgical technology to optimize patients' recovery and get them back to healthy, active lives.

Knee replacement surgery can help when more conservative treatments such as medication, physical therapy, injections and bracing don't successfully relieve pain or restore function, explains David Chalnack, MD, Medical Director of the Joint Replacement Center. "When your quality of life is affected to the point that simple things like getting out of a car, climbing stairs, walking or going to the supermarket are difficult, that's when we recommend knee surgery," he says.

Here's how two women benefited from following that advice.

AN AUDIBLE SNAP

As a union painter for Hamilton Township schools, Sherry Gans is on her feet most of the day, so she has to be fit and mobile. She'd already had surgery to repair the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) in each of her knees in the past.

But in March 2021, the 55-year-old Toms River resident was hauling five-gallon paint cans from her van into the paint shop when she felt and heard a snap in her left knee. "Everyone around me heard it, too," she says. "It was incredibly painful."

She underwent another arthroscopy—a minimally invasive procedure that accesses structures inside the knee—in what was to be a staged, two-part reconstruction of her ligament. But the joint had degenerated so much

due to wear and tear of arthritis that it was beyond repair. Following the attempted reconstruction, "my knee kept filling up with fluid," Sherry says. "I was trying to

work and just couldn't, I had so much pain and instability."

Sherry was referred to Dr. Chalnack to convert the ACL repair to a full knee replacement. After COVID-related delays, Sherry had surgery in June 2022. "Dr. Chalnack explained exactly what would happen and prepared me for everything," she says. "I've had a lot of surgeries in my life, and he is the best surgeon and best communicator I've ever had. He knew I really wanted to go back to painting and didn't want this to be the end of my career, so he told me I'd have to work hard at physical therapy [PT] after surgery."

Kept overnight at the hospital, she left impressed with MMC's staff, rooms and food. "I've never had such a good surgery and hospital stay," she says. "I truly felt like I was in a 5-star resort."

Sherry then began a two-week, at-home PT regimen. Initial pain gave way to greater strength and function. "My physical therapist pushed me as far as I needed to be pushed," she says, "but not too far." She soon made plans to start working again.

Today, Sherry's range of motion has been completely restored. "My leg extension is impeccable," she says. "I still have a little pain sometimes, but I'm able to do almost everything."

Even more important to Sherry, surgery allowed her to be physically active with her close-knit family, most of whom live nearby. "My 5-year-old great-nephew kept asking when I could run and chase him again," she says. "I'd tell him, 'Pretty soon now, pretty soon!' I'm just so thankful for Dr. Chalnack. He was my saving grace."

'TIME TO MAKE A DECISION'

Mary Ann Battista's job as an event planner for the financial industry often involved walking—and, increasingly, knee pain. "I work in very large resorts, and we're always on our feet," she says.

When the COVID-19 pandemic put a halt to in-person meetings, she worked remotely from home, which took less of a toll on her knees. Already considering surgery, she was able to put it off. But when pandemic restrictions eased, her reprieve ended.

"In October 2021, I worked my first in-person meeting again," she says. "From that time on, the meetings kept ramping back up and the pain just got worse."

One day in June 2022, while she was walking into a coworker's office, her knee buckled, and she fell. "I already had an appointment with Dr. Chalnack scheduled for the next week," she says. "I showed him the bruise, and he said it was time to make a decision." She had already failed conservative treatment, so she proceeded with her total knee replacement in July.

Like Sherry, Mary Ann went home the day after her surgery at MMC to begin two weeks of at-home PT, working through some initial post-op pain and swelling. "But I kept with my therapy, and by the beginning of September, I was back to doing laundry and getting my independence back," she says. Not long after, she could once again drive and return to work. "Dr. Chalnack is a great surgeon and human being who really cares about his patients," she says.

Newfound mobility improves personal as well as professional lives. Mary Ann and her husband looked forward to rejoining many activities they enjoy with friends in their community such as attending events with a local wine club.

"Once they get through the process, most people are very happy they had total knee replacement and wish they had done it sooner," Dr. Chalnack says. "The best part of my job is that every day, people thank me for giving them back their quality of life."



DAVID CHALNACK, MD

To learn more about knee replacement surgery at Monmouth Medical Center, call 888.724.7123 or visit www.rwjbh.org/ortho.