

RICHARD G. BUCH, M.D.

COMPLEX JOINT RECONSTRUCTION EXPERT

Q: What are some of the reasons patients need joint reconstruction?

A: In my practice, patients come to me after previous joint surgeries that have failed or infections in the bone that haven't healed. Many of my patients have injured their joints through years of wear and tear, accidents such as falls, or infection. Most often, patients have gone to a general orthopedic surgeon and have recently learned they need more extensive joint reconstruction, thus the term "complex joint reconstruction."

Q: What does complex joint reconstruction entail?

A: Basically, it means that I have very little bone and tissue to work with as a result of any of the previously mentioned issues. The first time you have joint reconstruction surgery, you lose what would be considered "enough" material. The second time, you're going to have even less. The third, time you might not have any left. I usually take cases at the second or third stage and, literally, reconstruct the joint.

Q: Does this mean you have to completely re-build the joint?

A: Yes. I'm rebuilding what is no longer there with artificial, custom-made joints for each patient, as no two patients—obviously—are alike. There are different types of materials, metals, plastics, and ceramics that can be used for artificial bone grafting and the use of stem cells can also be considered. The goal is to create the best possible prosthesis that will return the patient not only to normal function, but optimal health as far as the joints are concerned.

Q: Are all types and brands of joint replacements the same?

A: You might hear that they are all the same, but they are not. In my opinion, there is not one any better than another on the market or we would all be using it. Much of the success of complex joint reconstruction is the skill and expertise of the surgeon. Statistically, it takes a doctor about 30 cases to become proficient with normal hip and knee replacement. With the newest technologies and products available, it takes 50 or 60 patients to start seeing success. In other words, you don't want to be one of the first patients. You want to choose a surgeon who has performed complex joint reconstruction with the latest technologies on numerous patients and for many years. It's like expert carpentry. You don't want someone who just started building houses to build yours.

Q: Can complex joint reconstruction be performed on any joint in the body?

A: Yes, it is possible for hips, knees, shoulders, and ankles.

Q: Are there new technologies with this type of surgery?

A: I have recently been performing these surgeries with the assistance of robotics that put them together even better than before. Stem cell grafting has also resulted in improved outcomes, as the bone grows better. Advances like this help us take better care of the patient, which is our ultimate goal.

Q: What is the recovery time from complex joint reconstruction?

A: Thanks to these newer technologies and more minimally invasive procedures, I have been able to cut recovery time in half. For a total knee reconstruction, you'll need about six to eight weeks of recovery. For a hip reconstruction, you will need about six weeks. Most patients are back to their normal activities in three months.

Dr. Richard Buch has practiced orthopedic surgery for nearly 25 years. He is board certified in orthopedic surgery, a Fellow of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgery and the American College of Surgeons. He was one of the first surgeons in Texas to perform a custom modular prosthesis for hips and knees, which is now a standard procedure. He was also one of the first surgeons in the country to perform ceramic hip surgery. Dr. Buch currently utilizes advanced technologies including robotic-assisted partial knee replacements, iTotal custom knee implants made specifically for each patient, and reverse shoulder replacements. An expert on minimally invasive surgical techniques, he is renowned for his successful outcomes in surgery of the bone, muscles, and extremities.

Dr. Buch founded the Dallas Joint Replacement Institute, a highly specialized clinic offering complex joint reconstruction. Because of his pioneering efforts and experience, Dr. Buch is a leading expert in his field. Dr. Buch received his M.D. at the University of Illinois, completed his orthopedic training at the Indiana University School of Medicine, and performed his fellowship at George Washington University Medical Center, Children's National Medical Center, and the National Institutes of Health.

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