



# 'No more pain!'

## This hip surgery could change your life

By Laura Strom

If you have trouble sleeping, have quit activities you used to love or have difficulty starting to walk after rising from a chair due to pain in your hip, you don't have to live like that anymore.

Hip replacement surgery is one of the most successful operations in all of medicine, according to the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons. About 300,000 hip replacements are performed in the U.S. each year. And the procedure can be life-changing.

Keith Garabedian, 63, of East Hartford, can attest to that: He became pain free after both hips were replaced. Garabedian's job is physically demanding — he delivers large appliances — so having pain in both his hips was, well, a pain. "I couldn't drive, walk or sit without pain. I had no quality of life. It took

me 3 to 4 minutes just to get out of the car because straightening my legs was so painful," he says.

Garabedian regrets how long he suffered before seeking help.

### A call and an affirmation

Garabedian contacted his insurance company to see what he could do about his hip pain. The insurer recommended Vipul Dua, M.D., at Hartford HealthCare. After some online research, Garabedian told his nephew, who works in healthcare, about the insurer's recommendation. His nephew said, "I've heard of him. He's a great physician." That was very affirming for Garabedian.

Garabedian made an appointment with Dr. Dua, a board-certified orthopedic surgeon, fellowship trained in hip and knee reconstruction.



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## Do you have hip or knee pain?

Ask an orthopedic surgeon from the Hartford HealthCare Bone & Joint Institute your questions on the Hartford Courant's Facebook page on **April 24<sup>th</sup> at noon.**

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### The first appointment

Although Garabedian and others might wait until they are in near-constant pain to consider a joint replacement, Dr. Dua doesn't recommend waiting that long. He prefers offering a variety of options, surgical and nonsurgical, at the initial visit. Nonsurgical options might include physical therapy, medications, cortisone injections or activity modification: "Play less golf. Take shorter hikes. Do less of whatever hurts you," Dr. Dua says.

He recommends his overweight patients lose weight to reduce wear on joints.

"Losing weight is a very important part of the treatment. It's the only factor that will actually slow down the progress of the arthritis," he says.

Conservative methods, such as anti-inflammatory medications and other nonsurgical solutions, are the first course of treatment. If those options fail, Dr. Dua recommends exploring surgical options.

Nonsurgical methods help only for short periods of time. "They're not a cure," he says. "Arthritis doesn't get better on its own," he adds.

To improve surgery outcomes, Dr. Dua evaluates whether a patient is a good candidate for surgery — or can become a good candidate with some corrections.

"For example, we tell people to quit smoking six weeks before surgery. If they won't quit, we won't operate. We aren't operating on everyone who comes in. We try to correct their health beforehand to decrease the possibility of complications, like infection," he says.

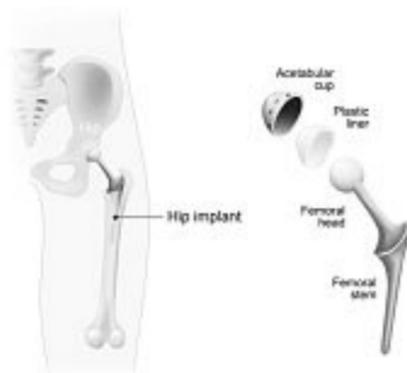
### The surgery

For Dr. Dua, the process of replacing a hip combines expert surgical skill with advanced technology in the form of a robot named Mako. Here's how it works: A CAT scan is taken of the patient's hip and a 3D image is fed into Mako. The 3D image determines the size and position — basically where to put the implant. Though it is Dr. Dua's movements that do the actual surgery, he is guided by Mako.

"I do the procedure using the robot's hand. The robot makes sure I execute the plan," he says. "It's so, so amazing," he adds. "The robot is the third eye."

Any diseased tissue is removed from the hip joint and new artificial parts made of titanium, ceramic and a new, improved plastic replace the ends of the thigh bone (femur) and hip socket.

### TOTAL HIP REPLACEMENT (arthroplasty)



### A recommendation

For those nervous about hip replacement, Dr. Dua gives this advice: "Of course it is a big operation. But hip replacement is one of the biggest successes of our generation, not only in orthopedics.

"I tell patients there can be some complications, that rate is 1%, but patients should do well. Those people who have a lot of pain before surgery — they'll see the most gain." He adds that today they expect these new implants to last longer — hopefully the rest of the patient's lifetime.

Garabedian recommends contacting Dr. Dua, sooner rather than later.

"Dr. Dua was such a positive influence. Such dedication. Nothing is a problem with him. Everyone at Hartford Bone & Joint Institute and Hartford Hospital are great. They go above and beyond to help the patient. You know you are going to feel better. I'm a new man. And the recovery is quick. I went home the same day!" Garabedian says.

To find out more about hip or knee replacement, contact the Hartford HealthCare Bone & Joint Institute, 860-972-2245, and get your questions answered in a Facebook Live discussion, April 24 at 12 noon. You can also send questions anonymously to [ConnectToHealthier@courant.com](mailto:ConnectToHealthier@courant.com).

—Laura Strom for Hartford HealthCare



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