

Shoulder Replacement Procedure Could Bring Relief for Arthritis Pain

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It was this past Super Bowl Sunday when Nan Fitzgerald knew she was truly getting better - just three months after she had shoulder replacement surgery on her right shoulder. During the game she was able to lift her arm straight up over her head when her team scored a touchdown, and it got the attention of her husband.

Close to 53,000 people in the U.S. have shoulder replacement surgery every year. Nan is one of those. She was diagnosed with arthritis, which is painful and a main reason for seeking out a replacement in the first place. She contacted Dr. Tom Kaplan, an orthopedic surgeon with Indiana Hand to Shoulder Center. He recommended a new device for her, a stemless shoulder replacement.

"This newer design does two things," says Kaplan. "One, it allows you to remove the ball part, so you have better access to the socket. You can remove any bone growth that's present. Second, we can avoid putting a big stem in, reducing pain and preserving more bone so we don't have to put a big stem in it anymore."

Generally the surgeon prepares the bone by sizing, planning and drilling. Metal pieces attach and provide stability and protection. When that phase is complete, the implant goes in.

"We remove the ball and then we fit the top part of the bone with an implant that doesn't go so far down," says Kaplan. There are advantages to this newer stemless system.

"Patients did as well as traditional shoulder replacement surgery, with similar improvements in their motion, reduction of pain, and restoration of activities."

Nan says her pain level before the surgery was off the charts. Now four months post op, it's negligible. The procedure is allowing her to travel with her husband of 13 years.

"I always wanted a marriage like this, and it is true love. You don't find it that often. And I want to live the longest best life to spend with him. So anything I can do to keep myself going, I'm going to try and do as long as it's safe," says Nan.

For more on shoulder replacement surgery, visit <http://www.wright.com>.



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