

Reverse total shoulder replacement

After 42 years of working as a cosmetologist in her Winthrop hair salon, Kay Norman's shoulders were worn out.

All those years of using her arms and shoulders to shampoo clients and physically push them in chairs had done a number on her shoulders.

"My rotator cuff on one shoulder was stretched so much, it was virtually broken in two," said Norman, who retired from her physically-demanding business 10 years ago. "I was beyond treating them with injections or pain pills."

Norman even had the torn rotator cuff on her right shoulder repaired about 15 years ago, but it only helped for a couple of years before the pain came back.

So when she heard about a reverse total shoulder arthroplasty being performed by David Hart, MD, an orthopaedic surgeon with Physicians' Clinic of Iowa, P.C. and medical director of Orthopaedic Surgery at St. Luke's Hospital – she didn't think twice about going for an appointment.

Coincidentally, her brother-in-law in Texas had a successful reverse total shoulder replacement done in Houston about three months earlier. "His came out so good that I wasn't a bit skeptical," said Norman.

So when Dr. Hart was visiting a clinic in Independence, Norman made an appointment. "I was ready to have something done," she said.

He diagnosed her with the symptoms that made her a perfect candidate for the procedure – an irreparable rotator cuff tear and arthritis of the ball and socket joint.

Dr. Hart explains that in the past, patients with that combination have been difficult to treat.

"If you put in a traditional total shoulder replacement, they don't do well because they don't have the tendons to hold the prosthesis in place," said Dr. Hart. "The result is an unstable joint causing poor function of the shoulder. A usual total shoulder replacement involves replacing the arthritic joint surfaces with a

highly polished metal ball and stem that is attached to the upper arm bone, and the shoulder socket is resurfaced with a smooth plastic liner."

But in a reverse total shoulder replacement, which was only approved in the U.S. in 2004, the socket and metal ball are switched.

What that does biomechanically, Dr. Hart explains, is that it lengthens the deltoid muscle, making it more efficient so that the patient can lift their arm over their head.

"Patients can perform normal functions such as combing their hair or reaching for something on the top shelf of a cabinet," said Dr. Hart. "It really improves the quality of their life and takes away the pain."

In Norman's case, she had the two-hour procedure done at St. Luke's Hospital last summer, stayed at the hospital in a private room before returning home and only used Tylenol to manage any discomfort after the surgery.

"I didn't have a bit of trouble and I did not have any pain," said Norman. "I used a sling that I could take on and off to take a shower and I did physical therapy for six weeks to strengthen my muscles."

Norman has no limitations and would recommend the procedure to anyone dealing with the same problems.

Painfree play with Norman's great granddaughter Madalynn is possible once again thanks to shoulder surgery.

"Everyone at St. Luke's gave me good care and constantly checked on me," said Norman. "I thought Dr. Hart was wonderful. He's very personable, he tells you everything clearly, and most importantly, he took away my pain. I wouldn't mind having it done now on my other shoulder."

To learn more about shoulder replacement surgery log on to stlukescr.org and check out A.D.A.M., our health information library.

Rehabilitation following surgery

St. Luke's Therapy Plus offers a comprehensive program to get active adults moving again after surgery or an injury.

St. Luke's Therapy Plus staff has a wide-range of expertise and special therapy certifications -- and each therapist develops individualized treatment plans for each patient's needs. Therapists work in partnership with a patient's other healthcare providers to help regain function, strength and flexibility through a customized care plan that could include exercise, massage and effective pain management techniques.

St. Luke's Therapy Plus treats a wide range of common injuries and conditions, including back and neck pain, foot and ankle pain, tendonitis and carpal tunnel syndrome.

Therapy Plus, part of the Human Motion team at St. Luke's, also treats work-related injuries through St. Luke's Work Well Solutions.

There are three St. Luke's Therapy Plus locations in Cedar Rapids. To learn more or to see a video tour log on to stlukescr.org or to schedule an appointment call 319/369-8107.



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David Hart, MD, orthopaedic surgeon
Physicians' Clinic of Iowa, P.C.
St. Luke's Orthopaedic Surgery medical director