## **COVENANT CONNECTIONS**



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## **Success After Shoulder Surgery**

Pam Willis of New Market had lived with pain in her left shoulder for many years. A retired Knoxville realtor, the 68-year-old now works part-time at a women's clothing store in Pigeon Forge. Because of her pain, it was difficult for Willis to reach the clothes higher up on the rack.

"I could lift my arm up to about my waist in front of me, parallel to the floor," Willis says. "I had pretty much lost my range of motion."

Like many people with arthritis shoulder pain, Willis could not remember a specific injury that caused it. Her osteoarthritis had developed over time, wearing away the cartilage padding inside her shoulder, causing friction and pain. Willis tried steroid injections several years ago with little success. She knew a shoulder replacement surgery could eventually be the answer, but was reluctant to do it.

"I lived in constant discomfort," remembers Willis. "I put the surgery off for probably five years longer than I should have because I



Pam Willis says she no longer has shoulder pain thanks to the shoulder replacement surgery at Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center.

was concerned about recovery and the outcome.

I had decided I was going to hang on as long as I could stand it."

In 2018 Willis began seeing orthopedist Bradley Jaquith, MD, at Fort Sanders

Regional Medical Center. He gave her good advice: to wait until she was ready.

"At my first appointment with Dr. Jaquith, he said, 'You'll know when it's time for surgery.' It always stuck in my head that yes, it

needed to be done, and no, it wasn't going to get better. One day, I just decided I couldn't do it anymore. So I called Dr. Jaquith and he got everything set up."

Dr. Jaquith performed a "reverse total shoulder" replacement on Willis in January 2019.

"A reverse shoulder replacement is when the orientation of the ball and socket are reversed, and the ball is on the socket side," explains Dr. Jaquith. During the procedure, the ball of the joint is attached to the shoulder blade instead of the upper arm, as in traditional shoulder replacement. "This gives the joint more range of motion and more power in the arm. But it looks totally normal, of course. Even on the inside, it looks close to normal, but the ball and socket are reversed."

Willis spent just one night at Fort Sanders Regional and said she received excellent care.

"I couldn't have asked for a better team," says Willis. "The Fort Sanders Regional staff was awesome and very attentive. If I had to go back through this again, I wouldn't go anywhere else."

Willis was sent home from the hospital the next day and within a week she began physical therapy. "I also did the exercises at home," Willis says. "I am of the belief that physical therapy is key for this kind of surgery. If you're not going to do the therapy, then don't do the surgery. I was very diligent about what I needed to do about that."

Willis's healing progressed quickly. "Within weeks of surgery I called my manager and said, 'I've got to come back to work. I need something to do!" she says with a laugh. "I couldn't lift anything, but I went back to work in a sling. I had it monogrammed so I could 'glam it up' a bit."

Willis says she has no pain now and has renewed strength and mobility in her arm.

"My day-to-day has improved so much. I don't have to make 10 trips in from the grocery store to carry everything. I can reach up in cabinets, I can pick things up; it's like it was never a problem.

I have no limitations now," she said.

Dr. Jaquith says the reverse shoulder replacement procedure has become more common than a standard replacement, especially in older patients. And, he adds, people of all ages can have a shoulder replacement successfully.

"One thing I hear people say is, 'I'm too old to have a joint replacement,' but I would say that's not necessarily the case for people," says Dr. Jaquith. "We have done them on patients up into their 80s, and they have recovered really well. Many people can regain function after shoulder replacement."

Willis said she would recommend Dr. Jaquith and Fort Sanders Regional to anyone facing shoulder replacement surgery.

"I am a huge fan of Dr. Jaquith! He made sure I understood everything about the surgery. I was in really good hands and I am very, very grateful to him. The whole team is very proficient and professional, and I would recommend them highly."

## Considering Joint Replacement Surgery?

Joint replacement surgery removes and replaces an arthritic or damaged joint with an artificial joint. It's usually considered after other treatment options haven't worked to ease pain or restore movement. Fort Sanders Regional's Joint Replacement Center is equipped with a team of experienced orthopedic surgeons, nurses, clinicians, and therapists who work together to stay on top of the latest technological advances and minimally invasive surgical techniques to provide better care for patients.

Here are some important points to consider:

Talk with your doctor about steps to prepare for surgery. For example, your surgeon may recommend specific exercises to strengthen your muscles prior to surgery. You'll also need to tell your surgeon about any medicines you are currently taking.

Some may need to be temporarily discontinued until after surgery.

Be sure to discuss discharge planning with your doctor beforehand. Your discharge plan may include instructions on care of the incision, pain medicines, activities, follow-up exercises and other home care instructions.

People who have a total joint replacement can lead functional, active lifestyles. One major component of many rehabilitation programs is exercise to restore function, mobility, and strength to the affected joint and surrounding muscles. Discuss with your doctor what an appropriate post-operative rehabilitation program should include.

As is the case with any surgery, there are some risks associated with joint replacement. It's important to make sure the procedure is performed by an experienced

surgeon in a hospital that has a great track record, like Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center.

Fort Sanders Regional's Joint Replacement Center has a specially designed program for total knee and total hip replacement patients. Patients become a part of their medical care team by being involved in education about their procedure. A special joint replacement class teaches patients everything they need to know to help manage expectations about their surgery experience and prepare their home for when they leave the hospital.

## Need an Orthopedic Surgeon?

Experiencing bone or joint problems and looking for a physician who can help get you



