

**GLOBE**

healthreport

IT looked like five and out for golden girl Dara Torres when she was struck down with a debilitating knee injury.

The 42-year-old mom from Florida set a record in 2008 when she competed at her fifth Olympic Games in Beijing.

During a glittering swimming career, she has amassed an incredible 12 Olympic medals, including four golds. But in recent months she's had to face up to the very real threat of a career-ending injury. Her knees have been bowing to the pressure of age-related deterioration that plagues millions of Americans.

She has been suffering from extreme pain in her left knee, the result of wear and tear on her cartilage.

"Some days it hurts to walk," admits Dara, who has a 3-year-old daughter, Tessa. "Going up and down stairs – forget it."

"I would like to be able to go to the London Olympics in 2012 and to chase my daughter around without any pain in my knees."

In a bid to end her pain – and realize her Olympics dream – the bombshell opted for a revolutionary new procedure called an Autologous Chondrocyte Implantation (ACI).

It was performed by Dr. Tom Minas of Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston.

Instead of invasive surgery, he used biotechnology to strengthen her knees by implanting them with her own cartilage cells.

KNEE AGONY THREATENS DARA'S DREAM

Will miracle surgery get her back in swim?

First the doc removed 10,000 cartilage cells – the size of three tic tac mints – from Dara's knee.

These were then sent to a lab and grown for several weeks until they numbered close to 50 million cells.

Dara's knee was then opened up and the cells implanted into the hole directly where the cartilage was missing. Now the swimmer has to wait while, hopefully, the cells regenerate into healthy cartilage.

However, Dr. Bal Rajagopalan, the famous Beverly Hills orthopedic surgeon known as Dr. Raj to his patients, tells GLOBE that the procedure isn't for everyone.

"While the results have been en-



Torres goes for Olympic gold

couraging, they are not 100 percent effective," he says. "We can do partial or full knee-replacement surgery that can take care of the problem and relieve the pain immediately."

"It's important to get several opinions before taking any route."

For Torres, it appears that her innovative treatment is working.

"My knee is doing great," she says. "They did an MRI scan that showed the cartilage is growing."

– LYNN ALLISON

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Dara hopes cutting-edge operation will end her pain

Hitting kids can help them!

+CHILDREN who are spanked by their parents are more likely to grow up to be happy and successful, says a new report. Kids under 6 who were physically disciplined did better at school during their teen years and were more likely to do volunteer work, found psychologists at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich. But the researchers noted youngsters who were spanked during their adolescent years often developed behavioral problems.

Coffee cuts risk of cancer

+GUYS, wake up and smell the coffee! That's the cry from experts who say java junkies could be protecting themselves against prostate cancer. A Harvard Medical School study found that men who drink more than six cups a day are 60 percent less likely to develop the killer disease. Researchers say coffee is packed with health-giving minerals and antioxidants – and it doesn't matter if you drink regular or decaffeinated.

Groovy way to healthy heart

+A RELAXATION technique made famous by 1960s hippies could just save your life. Transcendental meditation halves the risk of heart attack and stroke among folks suffering from heart disease, says a report by the American Heart Association. The therapy, which was practiced by The Beatles, reduces stress and lowers blood pressure by up to 47 percent. The technique involves sitting quietly and concentrating the mind to induce inner peace.

Update