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Tech boost for surgery

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Hip and knee replacement surgeries in the city will now be more precise and less risky with a new computer-navigated technique that can tell from outside the exact position of bones and the alignment of ligaments.

Belle Vue Clinic on Monday claimed to be the first in the city to introduce the "fourth generation" machine from Germany.

The new technique will make the surgeries at least 10 minutes longer. "It has more checks and balances and so it takes more than the standard one-and-a-half hours for other

computer-assisted procedures," said Santosh Kumar, orthopaedic surgeon and head of the joint replacement surgery unit at Belle Vue.

Computer-navigated surgeries have been conducted in Calcutta since 2006, but the German technology promises to increase the accuracy of knee-replacement surgeries from around 80 per cent to up to 95 per cent, say doctors.

The machine maps the position of bones in the knee joint using sensors. These sensors create a detailed image and provide information on a computer screen that help the surgeon install the implant. "The equipment not only

takes into account the bones but also aligns soft tissues like ligaments. So there is less chance of damage to ligaments and other uncertainties too," Kumar pointed out.

Buddhadeb Chatterjee, orthopaedic surgeon with Apollo Gleneagles Hospitals, said the software would make things easier for surgeons. "Steps like bone registration are not required. Bone registration is a process in which pointers are rubbed on the bones and the images are transferred to the computer through infrared," said Chatterjee.

He said the software was more precise and therefore better results were expected.