

Hip replacement

HIP REPLACEMENT surgery is when new, artificial parts replace the diseased parts of the hip joint. Usually, people need this surgery when their hip joint breaks down from such conditions as osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, avascular necrosis (loss of bone caused by poor blood supply), injury and bone tumors.

Before suggesting hip replacement surgery, the doctor is likely to try walking aids (like a cane) or such non-surgical therapies as medication and physical therapy—though they're not always effective in relieving pain and improving the function of the hip joint. Hip replacement may be an option if persistent pain and disability interfere with daily activities.

In the past, hip replacement surgery was primarily for those over 60. But in recent years, doctors found that this surgery can also be very successful in younger, more active people. New technology has made the artificial parts more stress and strain resistant. Also, when determining the success of hip replacement, the patient's overall health and activity level is more important than age.

But doctors may not recommend hip replacement surgery for people at high risk for infections or with severe muscle weakness since they're less likely to recover successfully.

Post-surgery recovery

Here are a few things you can do after surgery to help speed your recovery and make everyday tasks easier:

- Follow your doctor's instructions.
- Work with a certified physical therapist to rehabilitate your hip.
- Check out a rehabilitation center like Harmony. A short-term stay can get you back on your feet faster than if you were to go straight home from the hospital. And Medicare usually covers it.

Hip replacement surgery

Your hip joint is located where the upper end of the femur, or thigh bone, meets the acetabulum. The femur looks like a long stem with a ball on the end. The acetabulum is a socket in the pelvis, or hip bone. This "ball and socket" arrangement allows a wide range of motion, including sitting, standing, walking, and other daily activities.

During hip replacement, the surgeon removes the diseased bone tissue and cartilage from the hip joint. The healthy parts of the hip are left intact. Then the surgeon replaces the head of the femur (the ball) and the acetabulum (the socket) with new, artificial parts. The new hip is made of materials that allow a natural, gliding motion of the joint. Hip replacement surgery usually lasts 2 to 3 hours.

Sometimes the surgeon will use a special glue, or cement, to bond the new parts of the hip joint to the existing, healthy bone. This is referred to as a "cemented" procedure. In an uncemented procedure, the artificial parts are made of porous material that allows the patient's own bone to grow into the pores and hold the new parts in place. Doctors sometimes use a "hybrid" replacement, which consists of a cemented femur part and an uncemented acetabular part. Talk to your doctor about which type is better for you.

Recovery & rehab: What to expect

Usually on the day after surgery, therapists will teach the patient exercises that will improve recovery.

Physical therapy. A physical therapist may teach you exercises that can strengthen the hip. Because the new, artificial hip has a more limited range of movement than an undiseased hip, the physical therapist will also teach you proper techniques for simple activities of daily living, such as bend-

ing and sitting, to prevent injury to the new hip.

Post-hospital rehab. Full recovery from the surgery can take from 3 to 6 months. But the fastest road to full recovery is a short-term stay at a rehabilitation center. Just a few days of aggressive therapy and peaceful rest can get you back on your feet much sooner than going straight home from the hospital. Plus, Medicare and most insurance plans will usually cover the cost of your short-term stay.

Proper exercise. Proper exercise can reduce joint pain and stiffness and increase flexibility and muscle strength. Talk to your doctor or physical therapist about developing an appropriate exercise program. Most exercise programs begin with safe range-of-motion activities and muscle strengthening exercises.

Sports to avoid—and do.

Many doctors recommend avoiding high-impact activities, such as basketball, jogging, and tennis. These activities can damage the new hip or cause loosening of its parts. Some recommended exercises after hip replacement surgery are cross-country skiing, swimming, walking, and stationary bicycling. These exercises can increase muscle strength and cardiovascular fitness without injuring the new hip.



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