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Hip Replacement Surgery Basics

What is hip replacement surgery?

Hip replacement surgery removes damaged or diseased parts of a hip joint and replaces them with new, man-made parts.

The goals of hip replacement surgery are to:

- Relieve pain.
- Help the hip joint work better.
- Improve walking and other movements.

Points to remember about hip replacement surgery...

- Hip replacement surgery removes damaged or diseased parts of a hip joint and replaces them with new, man-made parts.
- The goals of hip replacement surgery are to relieve pain, help the hip joint work better, and improve walking and other movements.
- Risks of problems after hip replacement surgery are much lower than they used to be.
- People usually spend 1 to 4 days in the hospital after hip replacement surgery. It takes about three to six months to be completely well.
- An exercise program can reduce joint pain and stiffness.
- Wearing away of the joint surface may become a problem after 15 to 20 years, and may require replacement of the joint.

Why do people need hip replacement surgery?

Common reasons for hip replacement surgery include damage to the hip joint from:

- Arthritis.
- Disease that causes the bone in joints to die.
- Injuries or fractures.

- Bone tumors that break down the hip joint.

Your doctor will likely first suggest other treatments to decrease hip pain and improve function, including:

- Walking aids such as a cane.
- An exercise program
- Physical therapy.
- Medications

Sometimes the pain remains and makes daily activities hard to do. In this case, your doctor may order an x-ray to look at the damage to the joint. If the x-ray shows damage and your hip joint hurts, you may need a hip replacement.

Healthy, active people often have very good results after hip replacement surgery. But your doctor may not suggest this surgery if you have:

- A disease that causes severe muscle weakness.
- Parkinson's disease.
- A high risk of infection.
- Poor health.

How do I prepare for hip replacement surgery?

- To prepare for surgery, you can:
- Learn what to expect before, during, and after surgery.
- Ask the doctor for booklets about the surgery.
- Ask someone to drive you to and from the hospital.
- Arrange for someone to help you for a week or two after coming home from the hospital.
- Put things you need in one place at home. For instance, put the remote control, telephone, medicine, tissues, and wastebasket next to your chair or bed.
- Place items you use every day at arm level to avoid reaching up or bending down.
- Stock up on food.
- Make and freeze meals.

What happens during hip replacement surgery?

- During hip replacement, which lasts from one to two hours, your doctor will:
- Give you medicine to put your whole body to sleep so that you won't feel pain.
- Makes a 6- to 8-inch cut over the side of the hip. A smaller cut may be recommended in certain cases.
- Removes the diseased tissue from the hip joint, while leaving healthy parts.
- Replaces the ends of the thigh bone and hip socket with new, artificial parts.
- Move you to a recovery room for 1 to 2 hours until you are fully awake or the numbness goes away.

What can I expect after hip replacement surgery?

Usually people do not spend more than one to four days in the hospital after hip replacement surgery.

The following will happen while at the hospital:

Soon after surgery, you will:

- Breathe deeply, cough, or blow into a device to check your lungs. Deep breathing helps to keep fluid out of your lungs after surgery.
- Work with a physical therapist, who will teach you how to sit up, bend over, and walk with your new hip. The therapist will also teach you simple exercises to help you get better.
- Within one to two days after surgery, you may be able to sit on the edge of the bed, stand, and even walk with help.

After you go home, be sure to follow the doctor's instructions. Tips for getting better quickly are:

- Work with a physical therapist.
- Wear an apron to carry things around the house. This leaves your hands and arms free for balance or to use crutches.
- Use a long-handled "reacher" to turn on lights or grab things you need. Your nurse at the hospital may give you one or tell you where to buy one.

You should talk to your doctor or physical therapist about an exercise program to reduce joint pain and stiffness.

To be completely well takes about three to six months, based on:

- The type of surgery.
- Your health.
- How quickly exercises help.

Revision surgery (replacement of an artificial joint) is becoming more common as more people are having hip replacements at a younger age. This is because new joints generally last at least 10 to 15 years. Your doctor may consider revision surgery when:

- Treatments do not relieve pain and help you move better.
- X-rays show changes in the bone or artificial parts of the joint that require surgery.

What are the risks of hip replacement surgery?

Risks of problems after hip replacement surgery are much lower than they used to be. More common problems that could occur include:

- The ball comes out of the socket. This is the most common problem that can happen soon after hip replacement surgery. It can happen if you are in certain positions, such as pulling the knees up to the chest.
- Swelling that cause special cells to eat away some of the bone, causing the joint to loosen. This is the most common problem that can happen later after hip replacement surgery.

Less common problems after surgery are:

- Infection.
- Blood clots.
- Bone growth past the normal edges of the bone.

For more information go to: <https://www.niams.nih.gov/health-topics/hip-replacement-surgery>

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