

## **ARTHRITIS OF THE HIP**

Like other joints that carry your weight, your hips may be at risk for "wear and tear" arthritis. *Osteoarthritis* is the most common form of the disease. The smooth articular cartilage (cushion) that helps your hip joint glide may wear thin. Your first sign may be some discomfort and stiffness in your groin, buttock or thigh when you wake up in the morning. The pain flares when you're active and gets better when you rest.

If you don't get treatment for arthritis of the hip, the condition keeps getting worse until resting no longer relieves your pain. The hip joint gets stiff and inflamed. Bone spurs might build up at the edges of the joint. When the cartilage wears away completely, bones rub directly against each other. This makes it very painful for you to move. If you become less active to avoid the pain, the muscles controlling your joint get weak, and you may start to limp.

You're more likely to get arthritis if you have a family history of the disease. You're also at risk if you are elderly, obese or have an injury that puts stress on your hip cartilage. You can get arthritis if you don't have any risk factors.

**Treatment options:** While you cannot reverse the effects of arthritis, early nonsurgical treatment may help you avoid a lot of pain and disability. Surgery can help you if your condition is severe, the nonsurgical treatment has failed, and your quality of life is severely compromised by your hip pain.

**Nonsurgical treatment:** If you have early arthritis of the hip, the first treatment may be:

- Rest your hip from overuse (avoid running, jumping or impacting repeatedly on your hip).
- Follow a physical therapy program of gentle, regular exercise like swimming, water aerobics, walking on even, non inclined terrain, or cycling to keep your joint functioning and improve its strength and range of motion.
- Use nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications like aspirin, naproxen, ibuprofen, etc. for pain (if you have no contraindications, such as allergies or being on anticoagulants like coumadin).

You may need to lose weight if you are overweight. As the disease progresses, you may need to use a cane.

**Total hip replacement surgery:** If you have advance stages of arthritis, your hip joint hurts when you rest at night and/or your hip is severely deformed, your doctor may recommend total hip replacement surgery (arthroplasty). You will get a two-piece ball and socket replacement for your hip joint. This will cure your pain and improve your ability to walk. You may need crutches or a walker for a while after surgery. Rehabilitation is important to restore your hip's flexibility and work your muscles back into shape.

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