

Hip Replacement Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Hip Replacement?

Hip replacement involves the removal of arthritic bone ends and damaged cartilage and replaces them with prosthetic implants that replicate the hip joint. Hip replacement can help relieve pain and get you back to enjoying normal, everyday activities.

What Are the Reasons for Total Hip Replacement?

Total hip replacement is often reserved for patients who:

- Have a painful, disabling joint disease of the hip resulting from a severe form of arthritis.
- Are not likely to achieve satisfactory results from less invasive procedures, such as arthrodesis (artificial stiffening or fixation of the joint).
- Have bone stock that is of poor quality or inadequate for other reconstructive techniques.

How is a Total Hip Replacement Performed?

In a total hip replacement operation, the surgeon replaces the worn surfaces of the hip joint with an artificial hip joint. The worn head of the femur (thighbone) is replaced with a metal or ceramic ball mounted on a stem; the stem is placed firmly into the canal of the thighbone at its upper end. The acetabulum (hip socket) is prepared and implanted with a metal cup and plastic or ceramic insert. The ball and insert glide together to replicate the hip joint.

Who Should Have a Hip Replacement?

Hip replacement surgery may be considered when arthritis limits your everyday activities such as walking and bending, when pain continues while resting, or stiffness in your hip limits your ability to move or lift your leg. Hip replacement may be recommended only after careful diagnosis of your joint problem. It may be time to consider surgery if you have little pain relief from anti-inflammatory drugs, or if other treatments, such as physical therapy, do not relieve hip pain.

How Long is the Hospital Stay?

After hip replacement surgery, you will probably spend no more than three to five days in the hospital. Most hip replacement patients begin standing and walking with the help of a walker and a physical therapist the day after surgery. However, everyone is different, and you should discuss what you can expect with your doctor.

How Long is Recuperation?

Recovery varies with each person. It is essential that you follow your orthopaedic surgeon's instructions regarding home care during the first few weeks after surgery; especially concerning the exercise program you are prescribed. You should be able to resume most normal light activities of daily living within three to six weeks following surgery. Some discomfort during activity and at night is common for several weeks. Complete recovery can take from about three to six months.

While most people will gradually increase their activities and return to doing things like playing golf, doubles tennis, shuffleboard, or bowling, you will be advised to avoid more active sports, such as jogging, singles tennis, and other high-impact activities.

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Are There Complications?

As with any surgery, there is a risk of complications after hip replacement surgery. However, they are relatively rare. Blood clots are the most common complication after surgery. Your orthopaedic surgeon may prescribe one or more measures to prevent a clot from forming in your leg veins. These measures may include a special support hose, inflatable leg coverings, and blood thinners.

What is the Success Rate?

Hip replacement is one of the most important surgical advances of this century. This surgery helps hundreds of thousands of Americans each year to relieve their pain, and get back to enjoying normal activities.

How Long Does a Hip Replacement Last?

The conventional arrangement of a metal ball into a special plastic (polyethylene) cup has been shown to have positive results over the years. How long it will last depends not only on age, but also a patient's activity level. Newer hip replacement materials using more durable alumina ceramic and titanium have made major advances in hip replacement technology. Demand and activity levels are generally considered when the surgeon works with you to decide which type of hip replacement materials are best for you.