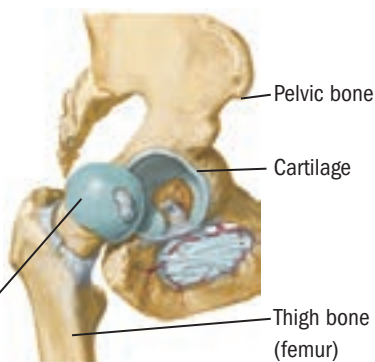


MANAGING YOUR OSTEOARTHRITIS OF THE HIP



Hip bone covered by cartilage

In osteoarthritis of the hip, the protective barrier between the thigh bone (femur) and hip bone is lost. It is very common when people get into their 70s.



What Is Osteoarthritis?

Osteoarthritis (degenerative joint disease) is an illness in which joints become painful and stiff. Most often, the knees, hips, and spine are involved, but other joints, such as those in the hands, can also show signs. These joints contain cartilage, the substance that cushions bones that touch. During osteoarthritis, cartilage breaks down and loses the ability to cushion the joints. In the hips, the protective barrier between the thigh bone (femur) and the hip bone is lost. The bones rub together, so pain and limited movement result. In advanced osteoarthritis, cartilage in the joints is completely worn away.

What Causes Osteoarthritis of the Hip?

Osteoarthritis is caused by aging, injury, trauma, and other factors. Osteoarthritis is very common when people reach their 70s. It can occur at a younger age in overweight people. It affects both men and women.



Advanced changes in the hip joint



Destruction of cartilage at joint



Limited movement of the hip joint points to hip osteoarthritis.

X-rays can show bone damage.



What Are the Symptoms of Osteoarthritis of the Hip?

Osteoarthritis develops gradually. The first symptom may be pain, usually in the front part of the thigh or groin. Pain gets worse with exercise and stops during rest. Sometimes, pain travels to the buttocks or lower part of the thigh. Morning stiffness may occur but goes away during the day.

As osteoarthritis gets worse, joints become less flexible. The hips become tender, and a grating sensation may be felt during movement.

How Is Osteoarthritis of the Hip Diagnosed?

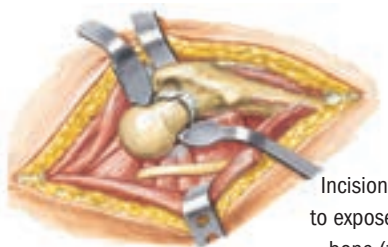
The health care provider's diagnosis is based on symptoms and a physical examination. The most important sign of early disease is an inability to turn (rotate) the leg toward the center of the body.

The health care provider may also take an x-ray of the hip joints or do more tests to rule out other illnesses that can affect joints. Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) of the hip may be done if surgery is being considered.

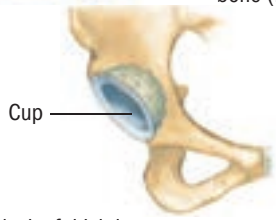


Treatment includes use of canes and walkers, with surgery (hip replacement) as a last resort.

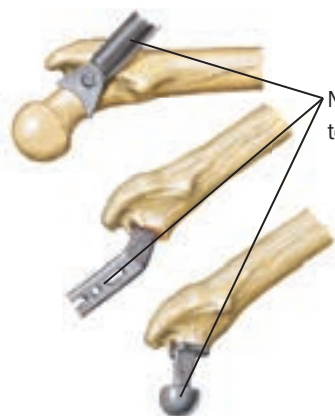
Total hip replacement



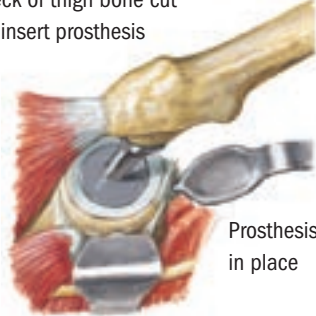
Incision made to expose thigh bone (femur)



Cup



Neck of thigh bone cut to insert prosthesis



Prosthesis in place



Take medicines as prescribed, maintain a healthy weight, and do the proper exercises.



Actively participate in physical therapy recommended by your health care provider.

How Is Osteoarthritis of the Hip Treated?

Treatment goals are to control pain and preserve mobility. The type of treatment depends on lifestyle and the degree of osteoarthritis. Keeping to a healthy weight is very important. Mild osteoarthritis may need only exercises to protect the hip joints and sometimes medicine for pain.

The health care provider may prescribe nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. They reduce pain but can have side effects (e.g., stomach pain and bleeding, or kidney, liver, and heart problems). Over-the-counter products, such as glucosamine and chondroitin, are popular but have not been proven effective.

Heating pads, warm soaks, and cold packs may help relieve symptoms.

The health care provider may prescribe a physical therapy program and medicines (pain relievers and antiinflammatory drugs) for more severe disease. Low-impact exercises, especially swimming, may improve muscle strength.

Devices such as canes or walkers may minimize stress on the hips. Correcting leg length differences with a heel lift may help.

If these approaches don't work, hip replacement surgery may be offered as a last resort.

DOs and DON'Ts in Managing Osteoarthritis of the Hip:

- ✓ **DO** take your medicines as prescribed.
- ✓ **DO** use physical therapy to maintain muscle strength and joint flexibility.
- ✓ **DO** make lifestyle changes to reduce discomfort and stress on affected hip joints.
- ✓ **DO** lose weight if you are overweight.
- ⊘ **DON'T** take part in work or sport activities that stress your hips.

FROM THE DESK OF

NOTES

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the following sources:

- American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons
Tel: (800) 346-AAOS
Website: <http://www.aaos.org>
- Arthritis Foundation
Tel: (800) 283-7800
Website: <http://www.arthritis.org>