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Osteoarthritis of the Hip

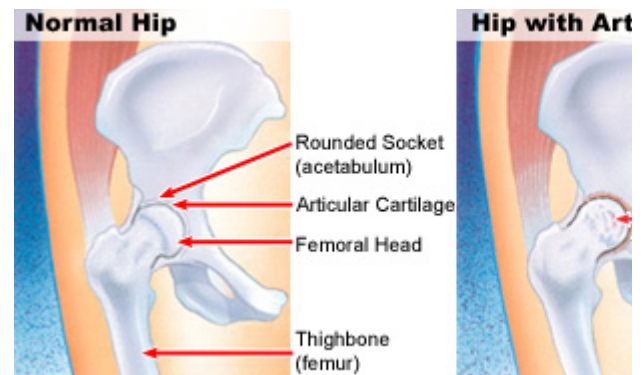
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Like other joints that carry your weight, your hips may be at risk for "wear and tear" arthritis (osteoarthritis), the most common form of the disease. The smooth and glistening covering (articular cartilage) on the ends of your bones that helps your hip joint glide may wear thin.



Cause

About 10 million Americans reported having been diagnosed with osteoarthritis.

You are more likely to get it if you have a family history of the disease.

You are also at risk if you are elderly, obese, or have an injury that puts stress on your hip

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cartilage.

You can develop osteoarthritis if you do not have any risk factors.

See your doctor as soon as possible if you think you may have it.

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Symptoms

Your first sign may be a bit of discomfort and stiffness in your groin, buttock, or thigh when you wake up in the morning. The pain flares when you are active and gets better when you rest.

If you do not get treatment for osteoarthritis 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. You may lose the ability to rotate, flex or extend your hip. If you become less active to avoid the pain the muscles controlling your joint get weak, and you may start to limp.

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Diagnosis

Your doctor will determine how much the disease has progressed. Describe your symptoms and when they began.

Your doctor may rotate, flex, and extend your hips to check for pain.

He or she may want you to walk or stand on one leg to see how your hips line up.

Both hips will probably be X-rayed to check if hip joint space has changed, and if you have developed bone spurs or other abnormalities.

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Treatment

While you cannot reverse the effects of osteoarthritis, early nonsurgical treatment may help you avoid a lot of pain and disability and slow progression of the disease. Surgery can help you if your condition is already severe.

Nonsurgical Treatment

If you have early stages of osteoarthritis of the hip, the first treatment may be:

- Rest your hip from overuse
- Follow a physical therapy program of gentle, regular exercise like swimming, water aerobics or cycling to keep your joint functioning and improve its strength and range of motion
- Use nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications like ibuprofen for pain
- Get enough sleep each night
- You may need to lose weight if you are overweight. As the disease progresses, you may need to use a cane.

Surgical Treatment

If you have later stages of osteoarthritis, 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 the flexibility in the hip and work your muscles back into shape.

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