

Hip Pain? Alternatives to Joint Replacement for the Active Adult

By Drew Rogers, MD, Orthopedic Surgeon

While many adults who are suffering from hip pain may think that invasive surgeries or joint replacements are their only options, this is not always the case. There are many specialized orthopedic procedures that can help repair your hips and prevent the need for a more significant surgery – especially for active teens and adults who still have a lot of life in their joints.

As a fellowship trained sports medicine specialist, I care for patients who share many common hip complaints, including pain or discomfort, tightness, muscle weakness and loss of strength. Oftentimes, these symptoms may be caused by one of the following conditions:

Labral Tears – A hip labral tear involves the ring of cartilage tissue, called the labrum, that follows the outside rim of the socket of your hip joint. Labral tears are often caused by traumas, structural abnormalities, or repetitive motions, often relating to sports or other physical activities.

Snapping Hip – Snapping hip is a condition in which you feel a snapping sensation or hear a popping sound in your hip during movement. While snapping hip is usually not painful, it can lead to other conditions such as bursitis. People who are involved in sports and activities that require repeated bending at the hip are more likely to experience snapping hip. Young athletes are also more likely to have snapping hip.

Impingement – Hip impingement is a condition in which the bones of the hip joint are contacting each other abnormally, damaging cartilage and often causing pain or arthritis in young adults. This condition is often aggravated by physical activity or sitting for long periods of time, like sitting in your car.

Loose bodies – Loose bodies are small fragments of cartilage or bones that break off into the hip, often the result of a sports-related injury or long-term wear and tear of the hip joint.

One of the latest treatment options for patients experiencing the above symptoms or hip disorders is called hip arthroscopy, also known as a “hip scope.” A hip scope is a minimally-invasive procedure that allows orthopedic surgeons to address hip pathology with the use of a small camera. It is less invasive than many other treatment options, using tiny “poke hole” incisions. The procedure results in a quicker recovery time, allowing patients to get back to their everyday activities, including exercise and sports, faster.

While more invasive surgeries, including joint replacements, are often associated with the older adult, there is a larger and younger demographic of patients who often benefit from this procedure. The age can range from teenagers to adults, with the average patients falling within the 20-50 years old range.

Taking care of your hips

Protecting your hip joints and maintaining a healthy exercise regime is essential to preventing painful hip problems. Here are some helpful tips on how to keep your hip joints healthy:

- Stretch properly before and after activities.
- Keep active and keep your muscles strong and healthy.
- Maintain a healthy diet and exercise, including walking, running, biking, etc.
- Maintain your core strength (lower back and abdominal muscles).

Dr. Rogers is currently performing hip arthroscopies at Morton Hospital, and is one of the first physicians in the area to offer this treatment option for common hip disorders. For more information on Dr. Rogers or to find a specialist at Morton Hospital, please call Steward DoctorFinder at 800-488-5959.