

Hip Fracture Surgery

Patient, Family and Carer Information

What does this mean?

The hip is a ball and socket joint. You have fractured the thighbone below this joint (see illustration).

The hip joint is a very important joint for weight bearing and walking.

Operations are almost always recommended because although some fractures around the hip will heal naturally this often involves several weeks to months of bed rest and significant discomfort as well as increased risks of medical problems such as chest infection and blood clots.



Which operation and why?

There are several operations used to treat fractures involving the hip and your surgeon will discuss which ones are appropriate for your case. Broadly it depends on whether the blood supply to the 'ball' of the 'ball and socket' joint is likely to be intact. If it is then the fracture can be fixed back into place and allowed to heal. This can be done with screws alone (**cannulated hip screws** - Figure 1), a plate and screws (**sliding hip screw** - Figure 2) or a nail down the centre of the thighbone (**intramedullary hip screw** - Figure 3).

The choice of the best operation for you will depend on the exact location of the fracture within the bone, the degree of displacement and number of fragments, your age, level of activity and independence. If the blood supply is not likely to be intact then the joint will need to be replaced. This can mean either replacing just the 'ball' of the 'ball and socket' joint (**partial hip replacement or hip hemiarthroplasty** - Figure 4) or the entire joint (**total hip replacement** - Figure 5). Total hip replacement may be considered over hip hemiarthroplasty for patients

What are the risks of this operation?

Although all possible steps are taken to reduce these, all surgical procedures involve risks.

More frequent risks

Swelling: Almost always present on the same leg following hip fracture surgery. Being related to accumulation of fluid in the tissues around and below the operated hip, it tends to worsen when the legs are kept low such as in a sitting position for long periods of time without moving. It can be minimised and improved by regular walking with periods of rest by lying flat for 30 minutes, 3 times daily.

Pain: The hip may be sore after the operation. It is important to tell the nursing staff if you feel pain so that it can be controlled. Although pain normally improves with time, it may continue after surgery. Further investigations, procedures or referral to specialist teams may be required. It is possible no cause can be found and it may be necessary to take painkillers in the long term.

Need for blood transfusion: This may be required after surgery, particularly if your blood level is low prior to the operation or if you normally take a blood thinner, being more prone to bruising.

Wound healing problems: the wound may become sensitive, painful or thickened (keloid scar). Massaging the scar with moisturising cream once it has healed may help. Delayed healing can also occur.

Infection: Every precaution will be taken to prevent wound infection. You will be given antibiotics prior to surgery. Despite this infections can still occur. The wound site may become red, hot and painful. There may also be a discharge of fluid or pus. If caught early, this can often be treated with antibiotics and may need an operation. If this occurs at a later date or if the infection is severe the implants may need to be removed or replaced. The infection can sometimes lead to sepsis (blood infection) requiring strong or long-term intra-venous (IV) antibiotics.

Infection can also involve the urine, chest, bowel or other systems.

Blood clots in the leg: Blood clots can form in the veins after surgery. This is known as a Deep Vein Thrombosis or DVT. They can cause painful swelling of the leg and very rarely, put your life at risk by affecting your lungs. Although you will be prescribed medication and other aids to help reduce this risk, starting to walk early and getting moving are the best measures to help prevent blood clots be taken to prevent wound infection. You will be given

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