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Surgery

Hip Replacement - Less Invasive Surgery May Prevent the Need

By

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Dr. Scott Levin explains the pros of hip arthroscopy surgery



(HealthNewsDigest.com) - Carmel, NY, – According to the National Institute of Arthritis, Musculoskeletal and Skin diseases more than 231,000 hip replacement operations are performed each year in the United States. But are all of these surgeries necessary and what other alternatives are available for people suffering with hip pain?

“Hip arthroscopy is a less invasive outpatient procedure that may be a viable alternative to open surgery for some patients,” notes Dr. Scott Levin, leading sports medicine doctor with Somers Orthopaedic Surgery & Sports Medicine Group. “Because the incisions are so small, arthroscopy is usually less painful, less costly, and affords a quicker recovery time than open surgery, which requires an inpatient stay in the hospital,” adds Dr. Levin. “It can decrease soft tissue trauma and blood loss, resulting in a faster recovery period compared to a more invasive open surgery.” Plus, the majority of scientific studies found the rate of complications to be less than five percent.

The procedure allows a doctor to look at the inside of a joint and the surrounding soft tissue through a thin viewing instrument called an arthroscope. It can be used to diagnose a joint problem, perform surgery that repairs a joint problem, remove a loose or foreign body, or monitor a disease or the effectiveness of a treatment.

Little pain and much gain

According to Dr. Levin, arthroscopy may even eliminate or at least postpone the need for hip replacement surgery. Current metal and plastic implants deteriorate and will eventually need to be replaced. Because arthroscopy can delay hip replacement, implants are likely to be made of better, more organic material that won't suffer the same degradation by the time a patient needs hip replacement.

“Arthritis of the hip causes a gradual loss of cartilage and alters the chemical composition of the joint fluid,” he explains. “This leads to irritation of the lining and fraying of the joint, causing further inflammation and fraying. Since arthroscopy staves off this damage, it may eliminate the need for an implant altogether.”

Who is an ideal candidate?

Hip arthroscopy is usually performed for non-arthritic hip pain and sports hip injuries in younger patients: the ideal age range is 15 to 55 years old. However, the science is rapidly advancing; arthroscopy is arguably the most rapidly growing field in orthopaedic surgery. According to the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, the number of hip arthroscopies performed will double by 2013.

Good as new

According to a study led by researchers at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago, the results of which were presented at last year's annual meeting of the American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine, the procedure may give athletes another opportunity to resume their sport back at their pre-injury level of competition. The study's 47 patients were diagnosed with femoroacetabular impingement (FAI), a condition that occurs when the femoral head of the thigh bone rubs abnormally against the acetabulum, or cup-like socket of the hip joint. This rubbing results in damage to the rim of the hip socket as well as the cartilage that

covers the hip bones. In examining high-level college and professional as well as high school varsity athletes, researchers determined that 78 percent of athletes suffering from FAI were able to return to their sport within an average of a little more than nine months following a hip arthroscopy. Also, 90 percent of the athletes were capable of competing at the same level as they had prior to their impairment.

What causes hip pain?

Hip pain is caused by the destruction of cartilage between bones, which provides the lubrication necessary to move joints; if this cartilage is destroyed, decreased range of motion may result. There are myriad causes of hip pain, from an earlier stress fracture to arthritis or spinal problems that affect the hip. Strains of the muscles around the hip and pelvis, such as groin pulls and hamstring strains, can cause a spasm. Hip displacement may have been persistent from birth and catches up to someone as they age.

Five signs that it's time to see a doctor

“If you don't know what's causing your symptoms, it's best to contact a physician because the treatment must target the root of the problem,” says Dr. Levin. He outlines additional indicators that a hip problem warrants an expert opinion:

If you can't walk comfortably on the affected side.

If the pain persists beyond a few days.

If you are unable to move the hip without pain or there's swelling of the hip or the thigh area.

If there are signs of an infection, including fever, redness, warmth or other unusual symptoms.

If hip pain prevents you from participating in the sports and activities you enjoy

Bio: Scott M. Levin, M.D., F.A.A.O.S is a board certified orthopaedic surgeon and sports medicine specialist in practice at Somers Orthopaedic Surgery and Sports Medicine. He earned his Doctor of Medicine degree at Temple University and completed an Orthopaedic Surgery Residency at Stony Brook University in New York. He went on to complete his Sports Medicine Fellowship at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York. He was the Administrative Chief Resident at Stony Brook University Hospital. Dr. Levin is the co-author of several research articles, including book chapters on various orthopaedic procedures. During his time at Lenox Hill Dr. Levin worked with many professional and collegiate athletes, including the New York Jets and New York Islanders, in addition to Hunter College and Hofstra University. He continues to work with high level athletes and currently serves as team physician for Pace University athletics (NCAA Division II), as well as several local high school teams including Mahopac High School, Carmel High School, Brewster High School, and Newburgh Free Academy. Dr. Levin utilizes minimally invasive techniques for treatment of various shoulder, knee, and hip disorders including arthroscopic treatment of rotator cuff disorders, shoulder instability, shoulder labral tears, throwing disorders of the shoulder, anterior cruciate ligament reconstruction, meniscus surgery, and cartilage repair. He also performs hip arthroscopy to treat injuries to the labrum and cartilage of the hip joint.