

Arthritis: Should I Have Hip Replacement Surgery?

Here's a record of your answers. You can use it to talk with your doctor or loved ones about your decision.

1. Get the facts
2. Compare your options
3. What matters most to you?
4. Where are you leaning now?
5. What else do you need to make your decision?

1. Get the facts

Your options

- Have hip replacement surgery.
- Don't have this surgery. Instead, manage your joint pain and other symptoms with other treatments.

Key points to remember

- Most people can manage osteoarthritis pain with medicine, exercise, physical therapy, and weight loss (if they are overweight). If these things don't work, then surgery to replace the hip is an option.
- Arthritis may get worse over time, but it may stay the same or even get better.
- Most people have hip replacement only when they can no longer control pain with medicine and other treatments and when the pain prevents them from doing daily activities.
- People who have this surgery usually have much less pain than before. And they can usually return to activities they enjoy. ¹
- Most artificial hip joints will last for 10 to 20 years or longer without loosening. But this can depend on how much stress you put on the joint and how well your new joint and bones mend.
- If you wait so long to have a hip replacement that you have already lost much of your strength, endurance, and ability to be active, then after the surgery you might have a harder time returning to your normal activities.

FAQs

What is osteoarthritis?

Osteoarthritis (OA) is a problem that affects all parts of the joint. For example, when cartilage breaks down, the bones start to rub against each other. OA can be a normal part of growing older, just like we get wrinkles on our face, our joints adapt to aging. The cushioning in the joint can reduce which can put more load through the bones. This can then become painful. The symptoms of osteoarthritis include joint pain, stiffness after you sit or lie down, and not being able to move freely.

What is hip replacement surgery?

Hip replacement surgery replaces worn parts of your hip joint with new metal, ceramic, or plastic parts. It can help with severe pain. It may also improve how well the joint works and moves. This type of surgery is an option for people with severe osteoarthritis who have lost a lot of cartilage and do not get pain relief from other treatments.

Most new hip joints will last for 10 to 20 years or longer without loosening. But this can depend on how much stress you put on the joint and how well your new joint and bones mend.

What other treatments are available?

There are a number of treatments for osteoarthritis that don't involve surgery. But what works for someone else may not work for you. Often a mix of things helps the most. Please tick if you should have tried any of them:

Medicine. If your pain is mild or moderate, over-the-counter pain medicines may help. These include paracetamol, co-codamol and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, such as ibuprofen or naproxen. But if these don't relieve your pain, you may need a stronger prescription medicine. Be safe with medicines. Read and follow all instructions on the label.

Steroid injections – may provide rapid pain relief. But for some people, this benefit only lasts a few weeks.

Ice or heat. Heat may help you loosen up your joints before an activity. Ice is a good pain reliever after activity or exercise.

Exercise. Exercise helps because it makes your muscles stronger, which lowers the stress on your hips. But make sure to talk to your doctor or physiotherapists about what kind of activity is best for you.

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Losing weight, if you're overweight. Losing weight helps take some of the stress off of your joints

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Physical therapy. This includes specific exercises that can help you stretch and strengthen your muscles and reduce pain and stiffness.

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Walking aids. There are many devices you can use to take some of the stress off of your hip. These include crutches, walkers or a walking stick.

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Dietary supplements, such as glucosamine and chondroitin, fish oil, or SAM-e. Some people feel that these supplements help. But medical research does not prove that they work. Talk to your doctor before you take these supplements.

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What should you expect after surgery?

Most people get out of bed with help on the day of surgery or the next day. You will start physical therapy right away. You will do special exercises and may need crutches for several weeks. It usually takes people 2 to 3 months to get back to doing their usual activities. But it may take a little longer than that for some people. A full recovery may take 6 to 12 months.

After you have recovered, you will probably be able to do your daily activities more easily and with less pain. You may find it easier to climb stairs, walk without getting tired, and do other activities that you did before surgery.

What are the risks of total hip replacement surgery?

Most people have much less pain after hip replacement surgery and are able to return to many of their activities. But as with any surgery, there are some risks, including:

- **Instability in the joint.** The hip may be unstable or could dislocate. There might be further surgery necessary to stabilise the joint again. You will usually be asked to follow “hip precautions” for 6 weeks after surgery
- **Wound-healing problems.** These are more common in people who take steroid medicines or who have diseases that affect the immune system, such as rheumatoid arthritis and diabetes. People who have any sort of artificial material in their bodies, including artificial joints, have a risk of infection around the material. But infection is rare. There is also a small risk of infection with any surgery.
- **Blood clots.** These can be dangerous if they block blood flow from the leg back to the heart or move to the lungs. They are more common in older people, those who are very overweight, those who have had blood clots before, and those who have cancer.
- **The usual risks of general anesthesia.** Problems from anaesthesia are not common, especially in people who are in good health overall. But all anaesthesia has some risk. The most potentially life changing ones are stroke, heart attack, and longer lasting confusion after the operation. An anaesthetist will assess you before surgery and discuss individual risks.
- Some people, over time, may have other problems. These include the feeling that one leg is longer than the other, loosening of the parts of your new joint, or sensitivity to metal. If you are allergic to certain metals, tell your doctor.

What do numbers tell us about the benefits and risks of hip replacement?

Pain relief with surgery

The evidence about hip replacement surgery suggests that most people are happy with the results.

Take a group of 100 people who have the surgery. Six months after hip replacement, about 90 out of 100 people have less pain and can do more activities than they could before the surgery.

Need for repeat surgery

- Most artificial hips last for many years. But they can wear out or have other problems. Some people have to repeat the surgery to have the joint replaced again.
- Take a group of 100 people who have the surgery (See figure 2 in appendix) . Within 10 years after the surgery, 5 to 12 out of 100 will need to have the hip replaced again.^{3, 4, 5}

Problems after surgery

The evidence suggests that, like most surgeries, hip replacement may have some risks.

Take a group of 100 people who have the surgery. About 4 out of 100 people have a serious complication like a joint infection, a blood clot, or a heart attack within 3 months after surgery. If you are older or have other health problems, your risk may be higher.

Why might your doctor recommend hip replacement?

Your doctor might recommend hip replacement if:

- You have very bad pain, and other treatments have not helped.
- You have lost a large amount of cartilage.
- Your hip pain is keeping you from being active enough to keep up your strength, flexibility, balance, or endurance.
- You don't have health problems that would make it dangerous to have surgery.

2. Compare your options

Have hip replacement surgery	Try other treatment
<p data-bbox="188 584 635 622">What is usually involved?</p> <p data-bbox="188 663 770 842">You will have spinal or general anaesthesia. You may be able to get out of bed with help on the day of surgery or the next day. Most people will have a short hospital stay.</p> <p data-bbox="188 882 759 987">You will need several weeks of physical therapy, including exercises you can do at home.</p> <p data-bbox="188 1028 778 1209">It usually takes people 2 to 3 months to get back to doing their usual activities. But it may take a little longer than that for some people. A full recovery may take 6 to 12 months.</p> <p data-bbox="188 1402 579 1440">What are the benefits?</p> <p data-bbox="188 1480 775 1590">You will likely have less pain and be able to do many of your daily activities more easily.</p>	<p data-bbox="809 584 1256 622">What is usually involved?</p> <p data-bbox="809 663 1342 768">You can try exercise, weight loss (if you're overweight), medicines or joint injections.</p> <p data-bbox="809 808 1377 913">You can try using crutches, braces, and other types of walking support to help ease the stress on your hip.</p> <p data-bbox="809 1352 1200 1391">What are the benefits?</p> <p data-bbox="809 1431 1356 1507">You avoid the risks and side effects of surgery.</p> <p data-bbox="809 1547 1355 1624">You avoid months of physical therapy, although exercise is still important.</p>

What are the risks and side effects?

Risks are small but include:

- Infection or wound-healing problems
- Instability in the joint
- A heart attack
- A blood clot
- The usual risks of general anaesthesia

Possible side effects:

You may need to avoid activities that put a lot of stress on the joint, like running or playing tennis.

You may eventually need another replacement, because the artificial joint can wear out.

What are the risks and side effects?

The strong medicines used for severe pain may cause constipation, mental confusion, drowsiness, and nausea and vomiting.

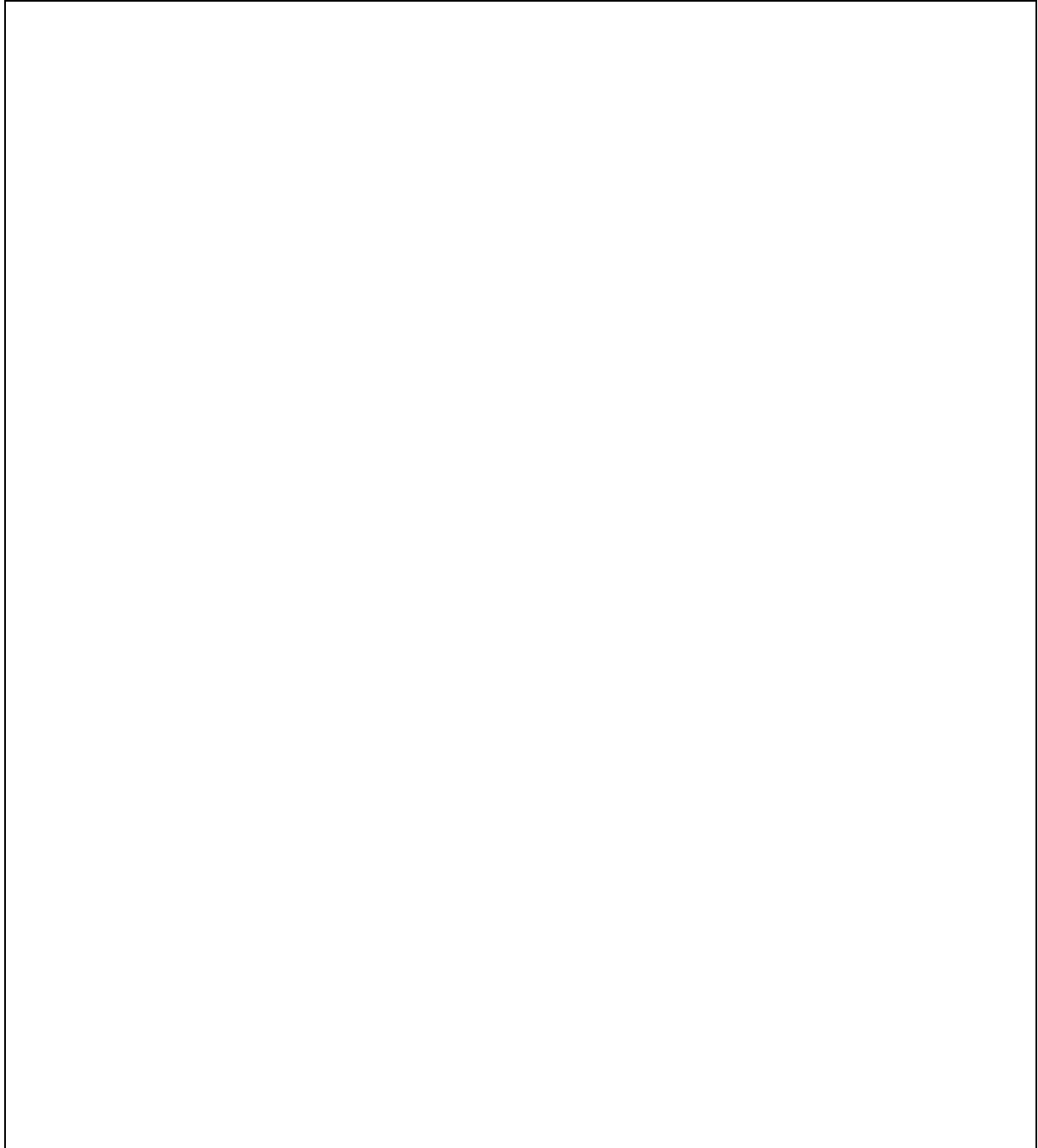
Steroid injections can cause pain and sometimes only short lived pain relief.

There are no bad effects from home treatments such as staying at a healthy weight, exercising, and using heat and cold therapy.

If you decide to have surgery later, and your limited activity has already caused you to lose strength, flexibility, balance, or endurance, it may be harder to return to your normal activities.

6. What else do you need to make your decision?

Note down any questions you have for your surgeon or anaesthetist.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write down any questions they have for their surgeon or anaesthetist.