



What Causes Osteoarthritis of the Hip?

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Osteoarthritis of the Hip

Osteoarthritis (OA) of the hip results when the cartilage cushioning the joints of the hip wears out, causing pain and stiffness. Much like the knees, the hips are weight-bearing joints, so that makes them more susceptible to wear and tear.

According to a 2010 report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the lifetime risk for symptomatic OA of the hip was 25.3 percent.

People living with osteoarthritis of the hip have problems with walking, but diagnosis can be difficult because pain can radiate into the groin, buttocks, thighs and even the knees. While osteoarthritis of the hip is a serious condition, it can still be managed and treated.

What Causes Hip Osteoarthritis?

The causes of OA of the hip are unknown, but certain factors contribute to OA developing in the hip joints. These include:

- Injury to the joint
- Increasing age
- Excessive weight
- Repetitive activity that puts pressure on the hip joint

Other less common causes include:

- Incorrect joint formation
- Genetic cartilage defects

People do not need risk factors to develop OA, and anyone can develop this painful condition.

Osteoarthritis is not the only form of arthritis that affects the hip joints. Other types of arthritis that cause joint inflammation in the hip, including:

- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Ankylosing spondylitis
- Systemic lupus erythematosus
- Psoriatic arthritis

There is no cure for OA and any of the other types of arthritis. However, there are ways to treat pain, inflammation and other symptoms of osteoarthritis.

Diagnosing Osteoarthritis of the Hip

There is no lab testing to identify osteoarthritis of the hip. Doctors must try to determine what is causing your hip pain beginning with a physical exam and identification of symptoms.

X-rays and MRIs can best confirm hip osteoarthritis. Your doctor may want to do lab work to rule out other possible forms of arthritis.

Treating Hip Osteoarthritis

Changes to the hip joints from OA are irreversible, but OA can be slowed down. Most of the treatments recommended for OA help to reduce the load the hips carry.

Lifestyle changes, non-medicinal therapies, and medical treatments are all treatments for OA of the hip. Medications, injections, and surgery are used in more severe cases of OA of the hip.

A good OA treatment plan provides a balance between the need for activity and rest. And the sooner treatment starts, the better chances the hip joints can be spared from further damage.

Lifestyle Changes

There are certain lifestyle things you can do to minimize stress and strain on your joints.

Modification of Activity

Exercise is important for treating osteoarthritis in the hip, but some activities will aggravate hip joints and should be substituted for ones that are easier on the joints. For example, golf requires twisting and turning at the hip and other activities, such as swimming and cycling exert less stress on hip joints.

Rest

Some discomfort is not unusual especially in the morning when joints tend to be stiff. However, if you experience severe bone pain, you should not work through the pain.

Even moderate levels of pain are a signal you need to rest your hip joints.

Weight Loss

Your hips support your body, and each 10 pounds you gain can put up to 60 extra pounds of pressure on the hip joints with every step you take. Therefore, losing weight can help reduce your hip pain and keep OA from worsening in the affected hip.

Non-Medicinal Therapies

Non-drug treatments for OA have become popular in recent years. If you would rather not take medications to manage your hip arthritis, there are many options to explore.

Physical Therapy

A physical therapist can prescribe an exercise program to help strengthen and stretch the muscles of the hip. Stronger muscles support the hip better and ease the strain on it.

Physical therapy can also help improve your balance and gait. Your therapist can also employ manual therapy techniques.

Manual therapy involves the use of skilled hand and passive movements of joints and soft tissues to increase the individual's range of motion, induce relaxation and reduce swelling, inflammation, and restriction.

Assistive Devices

Assistive devices can make it easier for you to move and keep strain off of affected hip joints. Those can range from motorized equipment to canes and walkers.

Supplements

Some studies have found that certain supplements can help reduce arthritis symptoms and slow down joint damage.

The most popular joint supplements are:

- Glucosamine
- Fish oil
- Chondroitin
- Ginger
- Methylsulfonylmethane (MSM)

Medicines

Mild pain symptoms from hip OA can be treated with over-the-counter pain relievers, including ibuprofen and acetaminophen. Some of these medications have anti-inflammatory qualities as well.

Topical pain relievers, such as capsaicin, can be applied to the skin to help relieve hip joint pain.

If your pain is moderate or severe, your doctor can prescribe stronger osteoarthritis medications, pain relievers or anti-arthritis medicine.

Doctors also offer injections for your osteoarthritis to help with pain reduction. The two most common are hyaluronic acid and corticosteroid injections.

Hyaluronic acid helps lubricate hip joints and reduces stiffness. Corticosteroid injections help reduce inflammation, swelling, and pain, but relief is temporary, and long-term use may thin out bones.

Surgery

Surgery is typically considered to be the last option when other therapies don't provide enough relief and if your hip is causing disability.

There are two options for hip surgery:

- Hip resurfacing replaces damaged bone and cartilage with a metal shell.
- Total hip replacement involves replacing the socket and head of the femur with artificial surfaces.

Hip surgery can significantly improve your quality of life, and 10-year success rates are greater than 90 percent, this according to the University of Washington. But hip surgery is more complicated if you have had hip arthritis for a long time and hip surgery is not without side effects, including blood clots.

The Bottom Line

Osteoarthritis of the hip has no cure, but there are many effective treatments to help you manage pain and symptoms. Many people can find relief with medication, lifestyle change, and non-medical therapies.

Speak to your doctor to find a treatment plan that helps you to reduce pain and keep pressure off your affected hip.