

Health Tips

from New London Hospital

Hip Replacement Surgery: Traditional Method

Hip replacement surgery is a procedure in which an orthopedic surgeon removes a painful arthritic hip joint and replaces it with an artificial joint. It usually is done when all other treatment options have failed to provide adequate pain relief.

Hip replacement surgery can be performed traditionally or by using what is considered a minimally-invasive technique. The main difference between the two procedures is the size of the incision. An experienced orthopedic surgeon will evaluate the patient and determine which is the most appropriate technique.

During standard hip replacement surgery, general anesthesia is administered to relax the muscles. The surgeon will then make a cut along the side of the hip and move the muscles connected to the top of the thighbone to expose the hip joint. Next, the ball portion of the joint is removed by cutting the thighbone with a saw. Then an artificial joint is attached to the thighbone using either cement or a special material that allows the remaining bone to attach to the new joint.

The surgeon then prepares the surface of the hipbone—removing any damaged cartilage—and attaches the replacement socket part to the hipbone. The new ball part of the thighbone is then inserted into the socket part of the hip. A drain may be put in to help drain any fluid. The surgeon then reattaches the muscles and closes the incision.

Hip replacement surgeries may be performed using the standard technique (one 8 to 10 inch cut along the side of the hip) or a minimally invasive technique in which the surgeon makes one to two cuts from 2 to 5 inches long. The same procedure is performed through these small cuts as with standard hip replacement surgery.

In the next Health Tips, we'll describe this newer approach in more detail.

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