

Hip Replacement Surgery

Your guide to preparing for surgery and getting the best results from your recovery



Dr Sam Martin



Health
Northern NSW
Local Health District

We acknowledge that the Bundjalung, Yaegl, Gumbaynggir and Githabul Nations are the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters where we work and live. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians' living culture, their connection to country and their contribution to the life of this region. We pay our respects to the Ancestors and Elders of these Nations, and to all Aboriginal people past, present and emerging.

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Developed by physiotherapists, doctors and nurses at Grafton Base Hospital.



This booklet is an approved reader-friendly resource.

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The Specialist Orthopaedic Centre Grafton

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Phone 02 6675 0737

Grafton Knee and Hip Arthritis Service (Physiotherapy)

Phone 02 6641 8770

Getting healthy for your surgery

You will have better outcomes from your surgery and an easier recovery if you are as healthy as possible. Some health conditions can also mean that your surgery is delayed or cancelled.

There are things you can do to improve your health while you wait for surgery.

Exercise

- Maintaining or improving your general fitness in the lead up to surgery will improve the speed of your recovery after surgery
- Specific exercises that target strengthening and maintaining the movement at your hip joint can also improve your pain and reduce stiffness in the lead up to surgery, as well as speed up your recovery after surgery.
- Exercising in the presence of hip arthritis is both **safe** and **helpful** to manage your symptoms while you wait for surgery.
- Occasionally people choose to delay or cancel their surgery because exercising the arthritic joint has resulted in a significant improvement in their symptoms.



Contact your local Knee and Hip Arthritis Service (KAHAS) 02 6641 8770 or a Physiotherapist to help get you started with exercise.

Alcohol

Do not drink alcohol for at least 24 hours before your anaesthetic.

Alcohol stops your body healing well and can increase your resistance to anaesthetic. Having more than 2 drinks a day, or more than 4 at one time can put you at risk.



Speak to your GP for ideas to help reduce your alcohol intake.

Getting healthy for your surgery

Eating well

- Being overweight or underweight can increase the risks of problems during your surgery. It's a good idea to discuss weight management with your care team.
- Eat mostly healthy foods and limit unhealthy foods. Try to eat meals that are full of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean meats or fish, tofu or beans and low fat dairy.
- Drink plenty of water and avoid soft drinks that are full of sugar.



Contact **Get Healthy** on 1300 806 258 for free health coaching.

Heart Health

It may be helpful to have a review of your heart health with a specialist prior to your surgery. If you have a previous heart condition or if you have a pacemaker you will need to have had a review with your Specialist in the last 12 months.



See your GP

Your GP can help you get ready for surgery. If you have a chronic health condition your GP can help you manage it in the lead up to your surgery.



Smoking

It's a good idea to try and quit smoking before your surgery if you can. Smoking puts strain on your heart and increases your chance of blood clots. It also makes it harder for you to breathe and increases your risk of infection. If you stop smoking you will recover faster from surgery.



Contacts to help quit smoking

Quitline www.quit.org.au or 13 78 48
Helping U 2 Quit Clinic 07 5506 7010
You can also contact your GP for help to quit smoking.

Getting healthy for your surgery

Help at home

- If you live alone or are a carer for someone, or if your hip is stopping you from being able to care for yourself or your loved ones, there may be help available to you both before and after your surgery.
- If you think you might need home help after your surgery, try to arrange it as soon as possible while you wait for surgery. This can help get you home safely earlier after surgery and put some of your worries at ease.



Contacts for help at home

- **My Aged Care** for people 65+ or 50+ for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people
1800 806 258 or <http://www.myagedcare.gov.au/getting-started>

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Occupational Therapy

- Occupational therapists (OTs) help people improve their ability to perform tasks in their home or workplace. They can recommend a range of equipment to help you be as independent and safe as possible.
- Equipment can often make daily tasks easier by conserving energy, limiting painful movement, supporting transfers and maintaining independence. Here are some examples of the most common equipment that can help before and after surgery:
 - Shower Chair or Stool
 - Bath Board or Transfer Bench
 - Over Toilet Aid or Raised Toilet Seat
 - Long Handled Aids: help you to reach your feet, back and objects on the ground without bending over.

Contacts for Occupational Therapy

Your local Occupational Therapist for equipment or home modification needs on 02 6641 8738.

Grafton Base Hospital Occupational Therapy - Equipment Loan Pool on 6641 8740.

Maclean Community Health Occupational Therapy – Equipment Loan Pool on 6640 0123.

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The Knee and Hip Arthritis Service (KAHAS)

You can contact the Knee and Hip Arthritis Service on 02 6641 8770.

The Knee and Hip Arthritis Service is located at Grafton Base Hospital Physiotherapy Department and Maclean Community Health.

- You may have been involved with this service before you decided to have joint replacement surgery
- You will be contacted to make an appointment with the service about 4 weeks after you go onto the waiting list for a hip replacement.
- A Physiotherapist will interview you and look at all aspects of your health – not just your joint.
- You, and those close to you, will be given information on how to improve your health as you prepare for surgery.
- Your surgeon and GP will be updated on your progress.



Getting ready for your hip replacement surgery

Before surgery checklist

- Confirm the date of your surgery.
Surgery date:
- Make physio appointment for 1 week after your surgery.
Physio appointment date and time:
- Make GP appointment for 7-10 days after your surgery.
GP appointment date and time:
- Start your skin preparation 3 days before your surgery.
- Start your bowel preparation 3 days before your surgery if you have been advised to do so.
- Speak to the hospital the day before your surgery and find out:
Time to stop eating:
Time to stop drinking:
Time to arrive at the hospital:
- Drink 4 Pre-Operative drinks in the afternoon and evening on the day before your operation.
 Drink 1 Drink 2 Drink 3 Drink 4
- Drink the remaining two drinks on the morning of your operation at least 2 hours before your admission time.
Finish your last drink before this time:

Gabapentin: If you are told by the anaesthetic team to take Gabapentin: Take 1 x 300mg capsule before your operation, at the time you are told by the day surgery staff

Time to take Gabapentin:

Getting ready for your hip replacement surgery

Two weeks before surgery:

- See your Physiotherapist:
 - Ask about pre-op (before surgery) exercises if you don't already have any. Discuss any other equipment you may need after the surgery.
 - If possible, practice using Canadian Crutches (forearm crutches) as you will probably use these the first time you get up after your surgery
 - Arrange an appointment for 1 week after your surgery.
- Work on any exercises you have been prescribed to get your muscles in good shape. This will help your recovery after the surgery.
- Contact your GP to arrange an appointment for 7 - 10 days after your surgery. This is in case you have any medication requirements or other issues after the surgery.
- Book your post op (after surgery) appointment with Dr Martin. Usually 2 weeks after surgery is a good time. If you live further away, 4 to 6 weeks after the surgery is also reasonable.
- Take care of your skin and try not to get any cuts or scratches. Don't do things that have a high risk of scratches, like gardening, mowing or playing with frisky puppies.

Please notify the Day Surgery Unit (6641 8351) or Dr Martin:

- **if you have scratched yourself and have any cuts, scratches or infections on the leg to be operated on.**
- **if you become unwell or have any other new health issues in the 2 weeks leading up to your surgery.**
- **if you are taking strong pain killers without your GP knowing. This will affect your recovery after surgery**

Canadian crutches (also known as forearm crutches)



Getting ready for your hip replacement surgery

One week before surgery:

- Read your medication directions. Check that you are clear about any medication you will have to take and how to take it.
- Read through the recovery from total hip replacement surgery information in this book. Please ask any questions that remain unanswered.
- Continue your exercise program.

Please notify the Day Surgery Unit (6641 8351) or Dr Martin:

- **if you have scratched yourself and have any cuts, scratches or infections on the leg to be operated on.**
- **if you become unwell or have any other new health issues in the 2 weeks leading up to your surgery.**
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Screening

- We currently screen all patients for staph aureus prior to elective joint replacement surgery to reduce the possibility of a post operative infection. Staph aureus is a common bacteria that lives on the skin or in the nose of about 1 in 3 healthy people. If the staph aureus enters the body through a surgical incision or cut it may cause infection. If your result comes back positive you will be contacted to have additional treatment to decolonise your body. This will include the use of a nasal ointment and a body wash.
- All patients will be given an antibacterial wash to use prior to surgery. Instructions for use will be given at your pre anaesthetic appointment.
- We also test your urine prior to surgery to ensure you have no current infections which could pose a risk for a post operative infection.

Getting ready for your hip replacement surgery

Three days before surgery:

Skin preparation

You have been given three sponges. For the two nights before surgery use 1 sponge in the shower each day. Use the last sponge on the morning of the operation. This will reduce your chance of infection.

How to use the sponge

- Wet your whole body and hair thoroughly
- Wash with the sponge paying special attention to the hip area that will be operated on. Also wash feet and toenails on the leg being operated on. Avoid contact with eyes, ears mouth and body cavities.
- Rinse your body thoroughly
- Wash your whole body again with the sponge, paying attention to your hair and genital areas.
- Rinse your body thoroughly
- Dry yourself with a clean towel

If you get a rash or itch, stop using the sponge and wash the soap off completely. Don't shave any areas on the leg being operated on. It will be carefully clipped on the day of surgery.

Bowel Preparation

You may be given three sachets of Movicol. Not everyone needs to do this. If you do, this is a gentle stool softener to protect against constipation after the surgery. It isn't heavy handed and is well worth taking to prevent trouble later. Take one each day for 3 days before the surgery (not the day of surgery).



Getting ready for your hip replacement surgery

One day before surgery

- Drink 4 Pre Operative drinks in the afternoon and evening on the day before your operation.
- The hospital will contact you the day before your surgery and let you know:
 - what time to arrive
 - from what time you need to fast (stop eating and drinking).
- If your surgery is on a Monday they will contact you on Friday.
- Please call the Day Surgery Unit on 02 6641 8351 if you don't hear from them by 2 pm on the day before your operation (or Friday for Monday surgery).
- What to pack for hospital:
 - Bring the information folder with you.
 - Bring your puffer or insulin (as advised by the preoperative clinic)
 - Walking aids, hearing aids and reading glasses
 - Loose comfortable clothes and pyjamas
 - Toothbrush and toiletries in case you stay overnight.

Day of Surgery

- Drink the remaining two drinks on the morning of your operation (finishing 2 hours before your admission time).
- **Follow the advice of your anaesthetist if it differs from this protocol.**

In the lead up to your surgery you will receive an email or text message with a link to a survey. You will receive the same link a number of times in the weeks and months after your surgery as well. Please complete the survey each time. This helps us to keep track of your health and surgery outcomes.

Recovery after your hip replacement surgery

Things that are normal:

- It is quite normal for your hip to be warm for weeks or months after a hip replacement.
- Swelling for weeks or months is normal too.
- A numb patch on the outside of the cut is also routine.
- Some bruising up or down your leg is reasonably common. This happens if some blood tracks under the skin to cause a bruise.
- It is also common for patients to experience a tough week or a period where they go backwards for a little while. As long as things get better again, that's ok.
- People who have had 2 hips done often find a difference between the recovery in each hip.

Alerts and things to watch out for:



- Excess pain, or trouble with movement can be a sign something is wrong. Severe pain can be a sign of an emergency.
- Signs of infection like fever, pain, redness or fluid/pus leaking from the cut shouldn't be ignored. If you are worried you have an infected hip replacement it is best to see an Orthopaedic Surgeon rather than your GP. Antibiotic tablets by themselves will not be enough to treat an infected hip replacement.
- Significant leg or foot swelling can be a sign of a dangerous blood clot.
- Difficulty breathing or chest pain can be a sign of a clot on the lungs which is an emergency.

These issues, or any other concerns would be a reason to contact Dr Martin, attend a local emergency department, seek other urgent medical assessment or call an Ambulance if unwell. Contact numbers are on page 4.

Recovery after your hip replacement surgery

When you wake up from your surgery

- You will wake up in the Recovery Unit , but may not remember this. You may have a pain buster catheter connected to a pump. This infuses the wound with anaesthetic for extra pain control.
- An X-ray is taken to confirm everything looks ok.
- There will be a small stick-on bandage on the opposite side to the hip that was operated on. This was used for computer navigation during your surgery.
- Nurses will carefully check that you have recovered from the anaesthetic well. If a urinary catheter was placed, it is usually removed when you leave recovery. The tubes attached to you can be removed too.
- When all this is done, you will be taken back to the surgical ward. When you arrive there, it will be time to eat and drink something to get your energy up. Try to drink 2 or 3 cups of water.
- Your legs will have stockings to prevent blood clots and your feet may have some foot pumps too. A foot pump is a Velcro shoe device that squeezes your feet to encourage blood flow and prevent blood clots.
- Your hip will be a bright pink colour from the surgical preparation.
- After eating and drinking, get dressed in your own clothes. These should be loose and comfortable. Ask the Nurses for help with this if necessary.

Getting up to walk

- When the feeling in your feet is back to normal and you don't feel dizzy, you can get up to walk.
- The first time you get up, make sure a nurse or a Physiotherapist is there to supervise.
- At first when you walk, you will use a frame, crutches or a stick for balance. Whichever aid works best for you, you will be allowed to put your full weight through your leg.
- You are also encouraged to get your leg moving from the beginning.

Recovery after your hip replacement surgery

When you wake up from your surgery

How will my hip feel?

- It is normal to have very minimal or no pain for the first 24 hours or so after hip replacement. It is still important to rest, ice and elevate your leg, so it doesn't swell and get sore later.
- If you do have some pain, there are things we can do to get on top of it. Just ask your nurse or doctor.
- You can use ice or an ice pack to ice your leg. Wrap the ice or ice pack in a clean towel. Never apply frozen material directly to your skin.

Apply the ice to your leg a maximum of 20 minutes at a time every 2 hours.

There is no need to ice your leg any more often or for longer than this.

Going home from the hospital

- You may be able to go home on the day of surgery if:
 - You have recovered well
 - You have good general health
 - You have someone at home to look after you

If you are at home and experiencing excess pain, contact Dr Martin or seek urgent medical assessment. You can visit the Emergency Department or call your GP and ask for an urgent appointment. Check the alerts on **page 14** for things to watch out for.

Recovery after your hip replacement surgery

Day 1 after surgery

How will my hip feel?

- As per the day of surgery, it is common to have very minimal or no pain for the first 24 hours after your hip replacement. Don't be disappointed if you have some pain, there are things we can do to get on top of it. It's important not to overdo it if you have no pain. If you have minimal pain, it is still important to rest, ice and elevate your hip so it doesn't get very swollen and sore later.
- If you have recovered well, have good general health and someone at home to look after you, you may be able to go home.
- You will be on some medications when you go home.

Post Op Monitoring

Starting the day after the surgery you will receive a link via sms or email (whichever is more convenient for you). This will happen daily for the first 5 days post surgery then second daily until 2 weeks after your surgery.

The link will be to a very short survey that will monitor your progress and notify Dr Martin about any problems that you are having with your recovery.

Recovery after your hip replacement surgery

Days 2-3 after surgery

- This is normally the hardest time. Your leg may feel heavy and more swollen. You may feel more pain around this time – but it does get less again! People’s energy levels or emotions are often lowest around this time. Don’t be disappointed if you feel like you have gone backward or are feeling a bit low 2 days after the surgery, both of these things are common.
- You will need to keep your wound dry. To do this in the shower, you can wrap your hip in plastic wrap or use a plastic bag and surgical tape.
- Keep working at your rehabilitation exercises as instructed by your physiotherapist. It’s important to take enough pain killers and to control swelling in your hip at this time too. Rest, ice, elevation and compression all play a role.
- For some people, repetitive exercise can be counter productive. The recovery from hip replacement is more about a gradual, natural return to function than a strict exercise protocol.
- If you went home within the first 24 hours after your surgery, you may have an appointment with one of Dr Martin’s team at 2 to 3 days post op. This is for a check up and to remove the pain buster.

Days 4-7 after surgery

- Things should be getting easier again. It is still important to keep on top of pain and swelling. By now you may have started to get a feel for what activities or exercises work for you.
- Your hip shouldn’t leak any fluid after day 7. Please notify Dr Martin or seek medical attention if it does.

The first 14 days: If you are at home and your pain is not well controlled, please discuss this at your check up, or contact Dr Martin by email or telephone for advice (contacts on page 4).

Also check the alerts on page 14 of this book.

Recovery after your hip replacement surgery

7-14 days after surgery:

- This is a good time to have an appointment with your physiotherapist. If possible, organise this before the surgery, in case appointments are hard to come by.
- This is also often a good time to catch up with your General Practitioner (GP), in case there are any medication or other issues that need addressing. It is also a good idea to have this appointment organised in advance, before your surgery.

2 weeks after surgery:

- Some patients will have an appointment with Dr Martin at this time. This appointment will normally involve a wound check and discussion about the rehabilitation progress so far. You may also discuss things like return to work and driving. If you live far away, you may choose to remove the dressings yourself and see Dr Martin at a later, more convenient date.
- There are no stitches or staples to remove as they will dissolve by themselves. The wound can get wet after the dressings are removed at 2 weeks after the surgery. There is a sticky, slightly rubbery strip beneath the main dressing. This can be left to fall off by itself or removed if it has been at least 2 weeks since your surgery.
- The prescription for your blood thinner medication will normally run for 30 days after you go home from hospital. Keep taking the medication for this time. Continue using the compression stockings for 2 weeks following your surgery.

2 to 6 weeks after surgery:

- This is a time to continue making progress with rehabilitation under the supervision of your Physiotherapist. You can gradually return to more strenuous activities as they are comfortable.

Recovery after surgery

Pain relief medications

Pain Management

Putting up with strong pain will hold your rehab back. Please let Dr Martin know if your pain isn't well controlled. Pain killers can play a part in your recovery. Swelling management is also important. Rest, ice, elevation and compression all play a part.

- It is important to get a good pain management schedule. Below is a summary table. There is more detail about these medications on the following pages.
- Pain killers can cause constipation. It is a good idea to continue Movicol and/or Coloxyl and Senna until things are back to normal. Make sure you drink plenty of water and eat enough fibre.

Pain medication	When to use	When to stop
Paracetamol/Panadol Osteo	Take regularly as per instructions on the packet	This is the last pain reliever you should stop.
Non-Steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (E.g Celebrex)	If you know you can take them safely, take it regularly as per instructions on the packet	Aim to stop them after 1 week.
Pantoprazole	Please take these when you are taking the non-steroidal anti-inflammatories regularly. This is to prevent any stomach upset.	Can stop this when you stop the non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs.
Palexia	Strong pain killer – Take regularly as prescribed	Can be stopped early if you don't need them. It is also reasonable to need them for a few weeks.
Endone	Strong pain killer – Take as breakthrough if the regular Palexia is not enough	

Recovery after surgery

Pain relief medications

Pain Management

Following surgery or an injury it is normal to have pain. Each person's experience of pain can be different but it is expected to last between a few days and a few weeks.

In most people this pain can be well controlled. It is important for your recovery that you manage your pain well so that you are able to do rehabilitation activities. You may have a pain management plan to help you know what pain relieving medication to take, when, and for how long.

This information is designed to help you manage this pain at home with either medication you have from your local pharmacy or medication from the hospital. Your doctor may want you to take a combination of these medications to help keep your pain under control.

You may have been recommended one or more of the following pain relieving medications to take at home. They may be prescribed alone or in combination to control your pain.

My pain relief medications are:

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Recovery after surgery

Pain relief medications

Medications For Mild to Moderate Pain

Paracetamol

Paracetamol 500mg tablets (Brands include: Panadol, Panamax, Dymadon or Febridol)

or

Paracetamol 665 mg modified release tablets (Brands include Osteomol[®], Panadol Osteo[®])

The usual adult dose of Paracetamol is one or two 500mg tablets, FOUR times a day, **or** one or two 665 mg tablets THREE times daily. This may have been prescribed to be taken regularly. Taking the full recommended dose may help keep constant pain under control. It is often important for people with stronger pain to help other medications work better, or to require less of stronger medications.

If you take the recommended dose, the risk of side effects with this medication is low.

If you have liver disease you should consult with your doctor before taking paracetamol.

To **avoid overdose DO NOT EXCEED** a total of 4 grams of paracetamol in 24 hours.

This is 8 tablets of 500mg or 6 tablets of 665mg.



Note that Paracetamol is also in some combination products (with codeine such as Panadeine[®] or Panadeine Forte/Codalgin Forte[®]) or Maxigesic[®] or Cold and Flu tablets. Always check the label for paracetamol.

Recovery after surgery

Pain relief medications

Medications For Mild to Moderate Pain

Anti-inflammatory Medication

This group of drugs include non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) and COX-2 inhibitors.

Drug Name (generic)	Common Brand Names
Ibuprofen	Brufen, Nurofen Maxigesic
Naproxen	Naprosyn, Naprogesic
Diclofenac	Voltaren
Indomethacin	Indocid
Piroxicam	Feldene
Meloxicam	Mobic
Celecoxib	Celebrex

These medications are used to control pain due to inflammation and swelling. Anti-inflammatories are used to treat mild to moderate pain. They can be combined with other pain medications to relieve severe pain.

Side effects are more common than with paracetamol. Common side effects include heartburn, stomach upset, dizziness, diarrhoea and headache.

To minimise these effects they must be taken with food.

If you experience side effects such as blackened stools, blood in vomit, skin rash, difficulty breathing or swollen ankles, contact your doctor immediately.

Anti-inflammatories have the potential to interact with other drugs e.g. warfarin, blood thinners and some blood pressure medication. Check with your doctor or pharmacist if you take any of these.



Before taking this medication it is important to let your doctor or pharmacist know if you:

- Have had a stomach ulcer or bleeding
- Have had asthma
- Have had kidney problems
- Have a history of heart failure
- Have had a previous allergy to any NSAIDS
- Are taking any other medication

Recovery after surgery

Pain relief medications

Medication for moderate to severe pain

Opioids

Oxycodone, Tapentadol, Codeine, Morphine, (Brands include: Targin, Oxycontin, MS Contin, Endone, Palexia)

Opioids are only to be used for moderate to severe pain and are often prescribed for temporary use after surgery. There are different types of opioids that you may be prescribed. They are available in tablets, capsules, patches and injections. These will often be used in addition to paracetamol and sometimes also anti-inflammatory medication, but should not be taken instead of these if they have been prescribed for you.

They are available in slow release formulations which are usually taken at regular time intervals and instant release formulations taken for 'break through pain'. Often a pain management plan on discharge will involve gradually reducing the dose of these.

Common side effects include nausea, vomiting, itchiness, confusion, headache and dizziness. Drowsiness can occur with opioids and may mean that you need your dose reviewed. If affected do not drive a motor vehicle or operate machinery. Let your doctor know if you become excessively drowsy. Alcohol should also be avoided when taking opioids.

How long should I continue the pain relievers?

Once your pain starts to subside, you may reduce the amount of pain medication you take until you no longer need the medication. Normally, you should start by reducing the opioids first, followed by anti-inflammatory medication and then paracetamol. However this may depend on your pain management plan.

If your pain gets worse when you are at home, or your pain relief medication is no longer controlling your pain, please contact your local GP or Dr Martin. If it is very severe, or you are worried something is wrong, seek emergency attention at a hospital (Emergency Department).

Frequently asked questions: Is hip surgery for me?

What is arthritis?

Osteoarthritis (OA) is when a joint wears down or fails so that it is rubbing bare bone-on-bone. Many people use the term 'arthritis' to dismiss vague aches and pains that they resign themselves to put up with. However, osteoarthritis is specific and usually treatable. It can cause pain, stiffness, bony lumps, bow or knock kneed legs and swelling.

Hip and knee replacements are examples of major operations for osteoarthritis. Surgery for osteoarthritis is generally the last resort. There are many non-surgical treatments that can also be discussed with the doctor.

Other types of arthritis, like rheumatoid or psoriatic arthritis, are often treated by a rheumatologist. An orthopaedic surgical opinion may be useful in these cases too if there is a lot of damage to the joints.

What is osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis is a condition often associated with ageing, in which bones become weaker and break more easily. It is known to be associated with other medical conditions or medications. If you are concerned, ask your General Practitioner.

If you are middle-aged or older and have broken a bone, it is also something to have checked. There are tests to rule out important causes and there are effective treatments too. If someone has osteoporosis, it doesn't mean they can't have a hip replacement.

How do I know if my hip is bad enough for a hip replacement?

Firstly an x-ray or scan is necessary to confirm bone-on-bone arthritis in your worn-out hip. A hip replacement is not an option to consider without bone-on-bone wear.

After that it is important to realise that not everyone with a worn-out hip needs a hip replacement. There are sensible alternatives that you should try first. If you are still having a bad time with miserable hip pain, then we would consider surgery.

It is major surgery. It is not something you should undertake for a niggle, or so that you can do something very demanding that isn't reasonable for your age group. It is, however, a very good operation for someone that is having significant trouble with day to day things like sleeping, walking or working, because of a miserable hip.

Frequently asked questions

Is hip surgery for me?

Do injections work for arthritis?

- There are different types of injections available. Any injection has a small risk of infection.
- Cortisone injections can give temporary pain relief. In general, these would be used to help pinpoint which pain was from where, rather than for on-going treatment.
- There are some lubrication-type injections, however these are expensive and the research to support them is inconclusive. In practice they are a bit “hit and miss”.
- Other injections include platelet-rich plasma or stems cells. These treatments are not yet at the point where they are useful in terms of making cartilage grow back. It is possible that stem cells may be useful in the future, but realistically that is a long way off. There are a lot of things wrong in a worn-out hip that would need fixing for cartilage cells to take.

What are my options apart from surgery to manage my arthritis?

- Exercise and physical activity is recommended for everyone with arthritis. The aim of exercise is to increase the strength of the muscles around the joints, maintain joint movement and increase your fitness. Exercise is safe to do for people with arthritis. Starting exercise is not always easy, so start slowly and gradually build up. A physiotherapist can assist in providing a tailored exercise program for you.
- Being overweight can contribute to the pain you have in your joints. Healthy eating and physical activity are ways to lose weight. Maintaining or achieving your ideal weight reduces the stress on your joints.
- Simple pain relief medication can help you keep moving. Your GP can provide advice on this. Heat and ice can also help manage your symptoms.
- These options may help you reduce joint pain, improve your ability do things at home and work, and benefit your general health and well-being.

Frequently asked questions about hip surgery

What is a hip replacement?

- A hip replacement involves resurfacing the socket on the pelvic side of the hip joint, and replacing the ball at the top of the thigh bone. A stem is placed inside the top part of the thigh bone to support the new ball. The stem is fixed either with cement or a bone growth surface. The new socket surface is usually fixed with a bone growth surface and sometimes screws.
- The surgery is done through a cut at the top of your leg on the front. Computer navigation is used to align the components. This involves a couple of tiny cuts near your hip on the other side.
- The wound is closed with dissolving stitches and dressings (wound coverings) are applied.

What is the anterior approach/ hip replacement from the front?

- There are different ways of getting into a hip joint. It is possible to do a hip replacement from the back, side, front or even top. The main thing is to get the internal components in properly and the approach doesn't matter too much. It is possible to get an excellent result via any of the available approaches. There are pros and cons to the different approaches which you could consider as fine tuning.
- Dr Martin has decided to use the anterior approach as it lends itself to navigation and accurate component position, which probably helps achieve long term reliability. It has a low dislocation rate and achieving equal leg lengths is more accurate. As a side effect, it also has the benefit of less pain and a quicker recovery.

What about the bearing? Is metal, plastic or ceramic better?

- There are lots of different options for lining the artificial joint. You may have heard of the problems associated with metal poisoning from some large metal hip replacements. Dr Martin does not use these hips. The other choices are mainly between a metal or ceramic head, and a plastic or ceramic socket liner.
- All the materials have improved a lot in the last decade or so. This has probably been the biggest single recent improvement in hip replacement surgery. There are pros and cons of each material and it is something to talk over with the doctor. Because of the “across the board” improvement, it is much less of a critical decision than it used to be. It is nearly to the point it hardly matters which of the available good bearings is actually used.

Frequently asked questions about hip surgery

How long does the operation take?

- A hip replacement usually takes around 90 minutes. Having both sides done at once takes 3 to 4 hours.
- A patient will often be gone from the ward for 4 hours or more surrounding their operation, so tell your family not to worry if you are having joint replacement surgery and it seems to be taking a long time.

What sort of anaesthetic can I have?

- Most times the operation can be done under either general or spinal anaesthetic, but there can be situations where the anaesthetist would choose a specific anaesthetic for safety. A combination can also be very good.
- Many people are anxious about having to hear the surgery with a spinal anaesthetic. Be reassured that this isn't a problem, because the anaesthetist can easily make you doze with a spinal on board. If, for medical reasons, it isn't possible to do the operation under spinal then a general is fine.

How much pain will there be after the surgery?

- The pain associated with major hip surgery isn't nearly as bad as it used to be. This is due to a combination of improved techniques and pain relief.
- Occasionally, someone will have significant post-operative pain, but there are always further steps available to get the pain under control.

Frequently asked questions about hip surgery

How long would I stay in hospital? Is Day Surgery for me?

- Patients are discharged when they are safe and comfortable to go home. With current techniques, this can be on the day of surgery.
- A day stay total hip replacement is an option for people who amongst other things:
 - don't have any complicated health problems that would need in-hospital care after the surgery
 - have someone at home the first few nights
 - haven't had any falls or faints in the last five years
 - don't require any walking aids like sticks or a walker before the surgery
 - have recovered well and safely walking comfortably after surgery

How long will the hip replacement last?

- The results of hip replacements are very good, and you can expect your joint replacement to last a long time, though this does depend a bit on your age, activity level and the underlying condition that required the joint replacement surgery in the first place.
- For most people the hip replacement would last more than 15 years and chances would be good that it might last as long as 20 or 25 years or more. There is, however, a small risk of failure at any time after hip replacement surgery, for various reasons. There is about a 1 in 100 chance of failure within the first year.

Can it be done again?

- In most cases, it is possible to redo a failed hip replacement. It is even possible to re-do it more than once. This is called a revision. Usually it is a bigger operation with higher risks and worse results than a successful first (called primary) hip replacement. Very occasionally it may not be possible to re-do the failed joint, but that really is unusual.

Frequently asked questions about hip surgery

What can go wrong after a hip replacement?

- Serious problems after a hip replacement are very unusual and the team working with Dr Martin go to great lengths to prevent them. Despite this there are risks to any operation.
- One risk is infection, which can cause early failure or ongoing pain. An infection can also spread to the hip later to cause failure, but this is also very unusual.
- Failure can also occur due to wear, loosening or breakage of the bones, or for other reasons, including dislocation. Dislocation usually only occurs in unusual positions that are easily avoided, and the anterior approach also diminishes the risk of dislocation. The anterior approach means we do the operation from the front of the hip, which avoids cutting major muscles.
- Normally the problem can be fixed with a redo operation, but if in the extreme case that this wasn't successful, it is possible to end up with no hip.
- Sometimes a patient can have a post-operative difference in the lengths of their legs.
- Usually a new hip would be less stiff than an arthritic hip, but very occasionally a new hip can set very stiff with bone growth.
- Usually a limp would be much improved after hip replacement surgery, but sometimes a limp could persist and very rarely even be worse. It is also possible but very unusual to still have severe on-going pain after a hip replacement.
- It is possible, but exceedingly unusual, to have a serious nerve, tendon, ligament or blood vessel injury during the surgery. This can cause a permanent problem.
- Other risks of any surgery include heart attack, stroke or blood clots. Kidney and bowel problems are also possible. It is possible to die from the surgery. It is important to talk through the risks and benefits of the procedure and any specific concerns you have, when making decisions about the surgery.

Frequently asked questions about hip surgery

Are blood clots a worry?

- There are different types of blood clots you can get after a hip replacement but there are good steps that can be taken to protect against them.
- A clot in the wound is called a haematoma. This can't spread to the lungs so it isn't dangerous in that way, but it is an infection risk. Very occasionally a hip replacement might need a haematoma cleaned out in the operating theatre. With current techniques the risk of a bad wound haematoma is very low.
- The other sorts of blood clots are ones in the leg veins (Deep Vein Thrombosis or DVT) that can travel to the lungs (Pulmonary Embolism or PE). A PE can be life threatening, but there are a lot of effective measures that the team of people caring for hip replacement patients always take to minimise the risk. **If you do get short of breath or have chest pain during your recovery you should seek urgent medical attention.** Significant leg swelling is also a reason to see a doctor as soon as you can.
- Bruising colours up and down the leg after surgery are not clots. They are usually from some blood that has leaked out of the surgical area.

Will I need a blood transfusion?

- Blood transfusions after hip replacements are very rare these days. However, it is important to tell your doctor if you have a bleeding problem. It is also important to discuss all your medications as some of these have a blood thinning effect. This includes over-the-counter medications and alternative treatments.
- You may have heard of pre-operative self-to-self blood donation. This is when blood is taken from you before your surgery so that you can be given your own blood if needed during or after your surgery. For hip replacement this is not offered anymore, as blood transfusions are so rare.

Frequently asked questions about hip surgery

Is infection a worry?

- Infection can be a major problem, so we take a number of effective steps and great care to minimise the risk of infection spreading to a hip replacement. Before the operation we screen and treat people for staph if needed. About a third of people in the community carry staph on their skin and a special treatment to clear it before surgery decreases the risk of infection.
- Pre-operative screening of other infections, pre-operative skin preparation, careful technique and great team work in the operating theatre and careful post-operative wound care, are also very important.
- With these and other steps the risk of infection is less than 1%.
- It is possible for infection to spread to a new hip years after surgery, usually via the bloodstream. This is very unusual but it is still worth taking steps to protect against. To prevent this you can:
 - check with your Doctor if you need antibiotics before other operations or procedures in future.
 - be aware if you are getting a recurrent infection somewhere, such as a kidney infection from a stone. It is very important to treat the infection and fix the underlying issue to minimise the risk of spread to your hip.

How long will it take until I am better? How long do I need off work?

- The recovery from hip replacement surgery is much faster than it used to be, but it is different for everyone and even different from hip to hip for people who have had both done. Some people reach the point where they are back doing what was normal for them before the surgery, as early as 2 weeks after the surgery.
- For some people it takes 4 to 6 weeks until they are better than before the surgery. For office type work it would be reasonable to allow at least 4 weeks off from work. If your work is more physical, it would be reasonable to allow 6 weeks or more.
- It is important not to be disappointed if your hip is getting better more slowly than average! Occasionally, people can experience a slower recovery. About 1 in 50 patients might take as long as 6 months until they are comfortable with the new hip.

Frequently asked questions about hip surgery

How long until I can drive?

- Driving too early is dangerous for you and other people too. Patients who can walk well without any assistance, and aren't affected by strong pain killers are usually safe to drive. It would usually be reasonable to allow 4 weeks. Please discuss your plan regarding driving with Dr Martin.

How much physio will I need after the operation? What about rehabilitation?

- The recovery after hip replacement surgery is generally much easier than it used to be and Dr Martin is continually fine-tuning his practice to make it as easy as can be.
- For many people intense physiotherapy is no longer necessary after the joint replacement. This is especially the case for people who have done a physiotherapy course prior to the surgery.
- Often, it is now simply a matter of doing some post-operative exercises, as advised by a physiotherapist, and getting on with life. Some patients will require specific attention to some aspect of their recovery, and this is something that is dealt with on a case by case basis.
- Rehabilitation in hospital is very rarely needed after a hip replacement these days. It is much better to go home and get on with life.

How active can I be after the operation?

- The main aim of hip replacement surgery is to reduce your hip pain and improve quality of life. Being more active in the lead up to and after hip replacement can have really important health benefits.
- Activities such as long walks, bike riding, swimming, golf or doubles tennis would be examples of reasonable levels of activities for most people after joint replacement surgery.
- The effect of high impact sports or activities such as running and jogging on hip replacements is not well known. If you are keen to do high impact activities after the surgery it is important to talk it over with Dr Martin. While it is generally recommended to avoid high impact activities there are some people who may be able to successfully return to this level of activity after joint replacement. There is no good long term evidence about the effects of high impact activities on how long your hip replacement will last.

Frequently asked questions about hip surgery

What is it like to have an artificial hip?

- It is very important to have a realistic idea of what to expect from a total joint replacement. About 50% of people who have a hip replacement will have a normal-feeling hip afterwards. This is called a forgotten hip - when the hip feels normal to the point you forget you have had the operation.
- To other people, the hip will not feel quite so normal and some will experience on-going aches or pains after the surgery. This should be manageable minor pain, not the severe pain experienced before the operation.
- Numb patches on the skin, relating to the surgery, are also common. These usually diminish over time, but some permanent numbness often persists. Your hip can also have a permanent abnormal contour or bulge after the surgery.
- Some people have the idea that an artificial joint will be a super hip: better than it ever was. While an artificial hip is not as good as the healthy hip of a young person, it should be much better than a painful worn-out one.

Will I trigger an alarm at the airport?

- This depends on what sort of metal you have implanted and how sensitive the scanner is. People ask if they should carry a card or certificate for the joint replacement. However there is no official document and this could easily be forged. Airport security staff are used to processing people who have had joint replacement surgery.



Health