

Total hip replacement

The hip joint

The hip joint is a ball and socket joint between the top of the thigh bone and the pelvis. It lies deep in the groin. It consists of:

- A ball (femoral head) at the top of your thigh bone (femur).
- A socket (acetabulum) in your pelvis.

Ligaments and muscles help keep the ball within the socket whilst allowing a large range of movement. In a healthy joint the surfaces of the ball and socket are covered by a smooth material called cartilage which provides shock absorbance and lubrication. However, the cartilage can become worn, which can result in pain, stiffness and restriction of your normal daily activity. This process is known as osteoarthritis.

X-ray of normal hip



X-ray of arthritic hip



Hip function

The hip joint bears the full weight of your body. In fact, when you walk, the force transmitted through your hip can be up to three times your body weight.

As well as transmitting weight, the hip needs flexibility so that you can function normally. Muscles surrounding the hip such as your buttock (gluteal) and thigh muscles (quads) are also important in keeping your hip strong and preventing a limp.

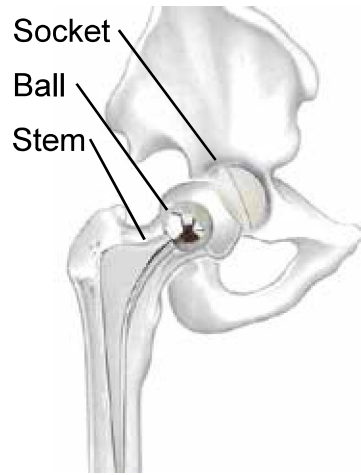


Alternatives to Surgery

Before considering surgery, it is important to try other alternatives. Painkillers such as Paracetamol, exercises to maintain the flexibility and strength of your legs, the use of a walking stick and weight loss can enable many people to manage the symptoms of osteoarthritis effectively without needing an operation.

Why do I need a Hip Replacement?

A hip replacement operation is considered when other treatments for osteoarthritis are no longer effective. The aims of the operation are to relieve the pain from your hip and to enable you to carry out your normal activities more comfortably. We use hip replacements with a proven track record and the results from the Exeter Hip Unit are among the best in the world.



A total hip replacement involves relining the hip socket with a dense polyethylene or ceramic cup and replacing the ball with a stainless steel or ceramic ball on a metal stem that fits in the thigh bone.