

Hip Pain

Causes of Pain and Discomfort Around the Hip Joint

Hip pain is a common problem, and it can be confusing because there are many causes. It is important to make an accurate diagnosis of the cause of your symptoms so that appropriate treatment can be directed at the underlying problem. If you have hip pain, some common causes include:

- **Arthritis**

Arthritis is among the most frequent causes of hip pain, and there are many treatments available. If conservative treatments fail, hip replacement surgery is an option.

- **Trochanteric Bursitis**

Trochanteric bursitis is an extremely common problem that causes inflammation of the bursa over the outside of the hip joint.

- **Tendonitis**

Tendonitis can occur in any of the tendons that surround the hip joint. The most frequently encountered tendonitis around the hip is iliotibial band (IT band) tendonitis.

- **Labral Tear**

The labrum is the cartilage that surrounds the hip joint. Hip labral tears are being recognized as a cause of pain and catching sensations in the joint. Often hip arthroscopy is a treatment option.

- **Osteonecrosis**

Osteonecrosis is a condition that occurs when blood flow to an area of bone is restricted. If an inadequate amount of blood flow reaches the bone, the cells will die and the bone may collapse. One of the most common places for osteonecrosis to occur is in the hip joint.

- **Lumbar Pain - Referred Symptoms**

Many back and spine problems can cause symptoms around the buttocks and hip. The most common problems that refer pain to the hip region are herniated discs and sciatica.

- **Snapping Hip Syndrome**

Snapping hip syndrome is a word used to describe three distinct hip problems. The first is when the IT band snaps over the outside of the thigh. The second occurs when the deep hip flexor snaps over the front of the hip joint. Finally, tears of the cartilage, or labrum, around the hip socket can cause a snapping sensation.

- **Muscle Strains**

Strains of the muscles around the hip and pelvis can cause pain and spasm. The most common strains are groin pulls and hamstring strains.

- **Hip Fracture**

Hip fractures are most common in elderly patients with osteoporosis. Treatment of broken hips requires surgery to either replace the broken portion or repair it with a metal plate and screws.

- **Stress Fracture**

Stress fractures of the hip are most common in athletes who participate in high-impact sports, such as long-distance runners. Treatment usually is successful by avoiding the impact activities.

Childhood Hip Problems:

- **Developmental Dysplasia**

When the hips are dislocated or out of position in infancy, the joint may not develop properly. While this is not usually painful as a child, it will lead to early arthritis and problems with walking.

- **Legg-Calve-Perthes Disease**

Also called Perthes disease, this is a problem similar to osteonecrosis (see above) but in childhood. If severe, it can lead to permanent damage to this hip joint and early arthritis.

When do you need to call your doctor about your hip pain?

If you are unsure of the cause of your symptoms, or if you do not know the specific treatment recommendations for your condition, you should seek medical attention.

Treatment of hip pain must be directed at the specific cause of your problem. Some signs that you should be seen by a doctor include:

- Inability to walk comfortably on the affected side
- Injury that causes deformity around the joint
- Hip pain that occurs at night or while resting
- Hip pain that persists beyond a few days

- Inability to bend the hip
- Swelling of the hip or the thigh area
- Signs of an infection, including fever, redness, warmth
- Any other unusual symptoms

What are the best treatments for hip pain?

Treatment depends entirely on the cause of the problem. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that you understand the cause of your symptoms before embarking on a treatment program.

If you are unsure of your diagnosis, or the severity of your condition, you *should seek medical advice before beginning any treatment plan.*

Some common treatments for hip pain are listed here. Not all of these treatments are appropriate for every condition, but they may be helpful in your situation.

- **Rest:** The first treatment for most conditions that cause hip pain is to rest the joint, and allow the acute inflammation to subside. Often this is the only step needed to relieve symptoms. If the symptoms are severe, crutches or a cane may be helpful as well.
- **Ice and Heat Application:** Ice packs and heat pads are among the most commonly used treatments for inflammation. Some people prefer one or the other, and some find relief with contrast treatment alternating ice and heat. In general, ice is used for acute inflammation, and heat for more chronic relief.
- **Stretching:** Stretching the muscles and tendons that surround the joint can help with some causes of hip pain. A good routine should be established, and following some specific suggestions will help you on your way.
- **Physical Therapy:** Physical therapy is an important aspect of treatment of almost all orthopedic conditions. Physical therapists use different modalities to increase strength, regain mobility, and help return patients to their pre-injury level of activity.
- **Anti-Inflammatory Medication:** Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications, commonly referred to as NSAIDs, are some of the most frequently prescribed medications, especially for patients with hip pain caused by problems such as arthritis, bursitis, and tendonitis.