

Information for Before Your Hip Replacement

In your appointment today the orthopaedic specialist discussed with you the possibility of having a total hip replacement. This is an operation in which some of your bone is replaced by artificial components. This operation is usually carried out under a spinal anaesthetic, also known as an epidural, with some sedation. The benefit of this is better pain control following the surgery with reduced side effects than if you had a general anaesthetic.

Approximately 84% of patients experience relief of preoperative pain.

Risks

There are associated risks with this surgery. The main risks with a total hip replacement are:

Infection – Every cut of the skin poses an infection risk. However your surgical team will try their best to minimise any infections. It is important that you have your wound checked post-surgery.

Dislocation – in the first 6 weeks you are at risk of dislocation. You will therefore be advised on certain precautions such as not driving to minimise this risk.

Leg length discrepancy – The surgeons aim to maintain correct leg length, or correct it if you already have a difference but this is not always surgically possible.

Nerve palsy – There is a small risk of nerve damage with this type of surgery.

Blood clot – All surgery carry a risk of blood clots. You will be advised on exercises to reduce your risk and relevant medication.

Pain – 5% of people continue to have pain following this surgery.

Recovery

Recovery from this operation takes between 3 to 6 months. There are restrictions on your activity for the first 6 weeks but you should see gradual improvements from day 1. You will be given exercises to strengthen your muscles and mobilise your joint by the physiotherapist while you are in the hospital. Initially you will need an aid to walk but you should be walking without one after 6 weeks. Full recovery can take up to 1 year.

A hip replacement is designed for moderate physical activities, not contact sports. They should last for 20 years or more. It is possible to do a further hip replacement, known as a revision but this is a more complicated operation.