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Hip fracture

Emergency Department

Information for Patients

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What is a hip fracture?

The hip is a ball and socket joint. The socket is in your pelvis and the ball is the head of your thigh bone (femur).

When you break or crack a bone this is called a fracture. A break in the top of your thigh bone, near to where the ball and socket meet, is called a hip fracture.

Why do people get hip fractures?

The most common reason why people get hip fractures is because of a fall. Older people are at higher risk of falling over. This is because as we grow old, we lose our strength and balance.

As we get older, our bones can become thinner, which is a condition called osteoporosis. This means that our bones are weaker and more likely to break if we injure ourselves.

How do we treat a hip fracture?

Hip fractures are often treated with an operation. We do this to reduce the pain from the hip fracture and to help you get back on your feet as soon as possible.

The type of operation you will have depend on which part of your hip is broken. Your doctor will talk to you about which operation is best for you.

Types of operation:

- **Internal repair:** The surgeon uses pins, plates, screws or rods to hold the broken bones in place to allow them to heal.
- **Partial hip replacement:** The head of your thigh bone is replaced with metal implants.
- **Total hip replacement:** The head of your thigh bone and the socket in your pelvis are replaced with metal implants.

How can we help reduce the pain?

In the Emergency Department, you will be offered pain killers. We often use a few different pain killers together. This helps most with pain relief. You may be offered an injection of painkilling medication (local anaesthetic) into the groin, called a nerve block. This will help to reduce the pain for quite a few hours so that you are more comfortable moving to the ward.

It is important to take pain medication regularly as they take time to work and you may not feel the relief straight away.

When will I have my operation?

We aim to do the operation within 36 hours of you being admitted to hospital with a broken hip. Sometimes this is not possible, for example if you have a medical condition that needs to be treated before you have surgery.

What happens after the operation?

You will work with a team of physiotherapists and occupational therapists. This will help you start to put weight through your hip the day after the operation. Our aim is to get you walking early so that you can be independent sooner. This will also help avoid complications such as blood clots in the lungs and legs. We may also offer you injections of blood thinners to help stop clots from developing.

You may feel very sore when first starting to walk. This is normal. It is important that you are involved in your recovery and we will encourage you to do this. The occupational therapist may suggest changes to your home and day to day activities to help you regain your independence.

When can I go home?

Our average length of stay for patients who have had a hip fracture is 11 days. This may be longer, especially in patients who have lots of medical problems. The team looking after you will keep you updated with your progress. They will work with you and a relative or carer, with your permission, to get you home when it is safe to do so.

How can I prevent another fracture?

You should go to your GP to see if there is a reason for your fall or fracture. If you have thinning of the bones (osteoporosis), you may need treatment with vitamin D, calcium supplements, or tablets that can help strengthen your bones. It is important to keep active, have a regular medication review with your GP and annual eye checks. You should eat a healthy balanced diet rich in calcium, vitamin D and protein. It is important to reduce or stop smoking. A fracture can take longer to heal if you smoke. We can support you to stop and also prescribe nicotine replacement.

How long will it take to recover?

It can take quite a few months to recover from a hip fracture. Every patient and injury is different and so is the healing time. Follow the advice of your team for a speedy recovery.

Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice
Visit www.uhleicester.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals.
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact uhl-tr.informationforpatientsmailbox@nhs.net

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