

An Overview of Hip Arthroscopy

There are many types of hip problems, and some of them can severely limit a person's movement and activity. In the past, there were few options for these problems other than major surgery. But now there is a new option for many people – a hip arthroscopy.

What is a hip arthroscopy?

A hip arthroscopy is a “minimally invasive” surgery. This means that it can be done with smaller scars and less pain during recovery. The orthopedic surgeon can view and repair damaged tissue through small incisions, using a special camera.

Patients who have hip arthroscopy can return to an active lifestyle in a shorter period of time than patients who have other types of hip surgery.

When would it be recommended?

Arthroscopy is used to find and treat certain hip problems. With arthroscopy, the surgeon can:

- Remove bits of cartilage that are loose in the joint
- Remove or repair a tear in the hip cartilage (called the labrum)
- Treat hip joint impingement, another cause of hip pain.
- Perform a biopsy
- Treat synovitis (inflamed lining of the joint).

Arthroscopy cannot be used to treat all problems of the hip joint. For instance, it would not be appropriate for patients who have severe osteoarthritis (loss of hip joint cartilage).

How is a hip arthroscopy done?

- The surgery is most often done as an outpatient procedure.
- Through tiny incisions, the surgeon can look inside the hip joint using an “arthroscope.” This is a small camera that looks right into the hip joint and sends pictures to a monitor.
- The surgeon can insert surgical instruments through other small incisions around the hip to remove or repair damaged tissues.

What is the recovery like after hip arthroscopy surgery?

Most patients can put as much weight as tolerated on the hip right after surgery. Some patients have minor limitations after the procedure, such as limited weight bearing, or the need to use crutches or a walker as instructed. The joint will likely be sore, so the patient will need to take it easy for at least a few days and avoid any strenuous exercise, lifting, or carrying.

In the first weeks after surgery, patients work on regaining motion in the joint and gentle stretching exercises. They usually work with a physical therapist to improve strength and flexibility in the hip. Most patients can begin light activities within a few weeks. Patients should not drive or operate heavy machinery until they check with their doctor.

What are the possible risks and complications from hip arthroscopy?

As with any procedure, hip arthroscopy has risks. These can include swelling and stiffness, bleeding, blood clots, infection, or continuing hip pain.