

Is your hip causing you problems?

Do you suffer with stiffness in the hip and/or groin area? Do you get an aching pain in the hip, groin, along the front of your thigh and/or knee after rest? Has this steadily progressed over a period of time? Do you find that these symptoms get easier when you have been walking a little way, but get worse when you've been walking for a while? If you are over 50 years of age and can answer yes to the majority of these questions, there's a reasonable chance that you're suffering with an arthritic hip.

The effects of high levels of activity (or, in those who are predisposed for some reason, moderate levels of activity) are a thinning of the spongy 'cartilage' substance that sits between the acetabulum (formed at the junction of the ilium, pubis and ischium bones of the pelvis) and the femur (thigh bone). This means that when force (e.g. gravity) is applied through the joint, the force isn't 'dampened' in the same way as it would in a fully healthy joint.

But don't panic! We've treated top sportsmen with arthritis in a hip - even when they're in their late 20's (!!)..... and they're still able to keep playing. What Arthritis generally means, in such cases, is "wear-and-tear" of the joint – the result of an active life.

Although treatment won't 'cure' such a complaint, there's a great deal that can be done to help. Firstly you need to get an accurate diagnosis. After all, the region of the pelvis and hips is a complex one and there are a number of other possible explanations for such pain (including a hernia, pain arising from the low back, a ligament injury, etc).

Once the diagnosis is established, the approach that seems to work best for the majority of our patients, is to start with a short course of treatment which will focus on returning your body to a reasonable level of comfort. This will be supplemented with exercises so that you can continue to help yourself after the treatment's stopped. Self-help is especially relevant in these cases. Dietary suggestions vary, and although the standard advice of 'lots of water and a decent amount of fresh food and vegetables' is a good start, if you're overweight, then weight loss is of especial value – after all every pound that sits around your waist has to be borne by your hips! Recent research from America has revealed this to be even more relevant than we'd previously thought.

Good, regular exercise is also valuable – although relatively 'non-weight bearing' activity is of course the best – because it helps to work your muscles whilst not 'loading' the hips too heavily. Swimming can't really be beaten – although beware breaststroke as it puts a lot of strain on various joints.

The evidence regarding natural supplements suggests that the best one to take is Glucosamine Sulphate combined with Chondroitin. There are a variety of such products on the market – we can usually recommend one that's appropriate for your needs, that's reasonably priced and good quality!

Experience suggests that even quite advanced cases can often be helped with treatment. So whether you're an acute sufferer of hip pain, someone who, for whatever reason, is unable to have an operation or even if you're waiting for an operation (and need some relief before surgery takes place) you may well be helped with osteopathy, physiotherapy and/or acupuncture.

Please visit our website for more information: www.woodsclinic.co.uk



An x-ray of the hip joint