

Orthopaedic Connection

Osteonecrosis of the Hip

By Thomas J. Haverbush, M.D.
Orthopaedic Surgeon

Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

This condition may be one you have never heard of. If so, you will learn something new and may have some use of the information in the future.

Osteonecrosis means literally the death of the bone. In this case the hip.

Cause – blood vessels that nourish the ball part of the hip gradually close off mysteriously. When this does happen the bone loses its strength and begins to collapse. The ball is supposed to be nearly perfectly round and smooth. As the round ball of the hip dies the ball becomes misshapen. This leads to arthritis of the hip.

Symptoms – the condition starts with no sign or warning. You can literally wake up one morning and have pain in the hip usually in front. Limping starts. Pain may be present with walking and at rest. Most patients describe it to me in this way. They say it is a dull ache or throbbing in the groin. It could be felt in the buttock also, but it's always in the groin.

Who gets it?

- Age range is 20 – 50 years
- Previous hip dislocation or fracture
- History of alcoholism
- History of taking Prednisone or other steroid
- Patient with rheumatoid arthritis
- Associated with several rare diseases like lupus

Diagnosis

On exam the hip is painful when flexed or rotated. Plain x-rays may show nothing early on, that is no bone changes. Later the ball of the hip will begin to look less than round. MRI will show that necrosis is present in every case. If it occurs in one hip it usually will happen in the other hip too at some point.

Treatment

There is usually no satisfactory treatment of the condition other than surgery. In a very early stage of the disease in which no collapse of the ball has happened, it might be possible to do a type of bone graft.

In most of the cases I have treated the ball has already undergone changes. I advise the patient that a total hip replacement is all that can be done. It is a very good treatment for an unusual condition which is very painful and disabling.

When hip pain occurs you should not ignore it. It should be evaluated at an early time.

My patients put their trust in me and what I do improves the quality of their lives.

Gratiot County Herald Archive and Office Website

I sincerely hope all of our loyal readers will take advantage of an endless amount of musculoskeletal information. It is easy! Log onto www.orthopodsurgeon.com.

It gives access to 1) All Website articles, 2) Your Orthopaedic Connection, 3) Every GCH article from most recent to the first - full text! It covers everything I do in the office and hospital.

Good Health. Good Life. All the Best to you.

Dr. Haverbush