

Hip Osteoarthritis

What You Need to Know

What Is Hip Osteoarthritis?

Hip osteoarthritis (OA) is the gradual breakdown of the cartilage that cushions the ball-and-socket joint of the hip. As cartilage wears away, the bones begin to rub together, causing pain, stiffness, and reduced mobility. The hip is the second most commonly affected joint after the knee, and hip OA is a leading cause of disability in adults over 50.

Importantly, the degree of arthritis visible on X-ray does not always match the level of pain or disability. Many people with significant arthritis on imaging function very well, while others with mild changes are quite limited. Muscle strength, body weight, activity level, and overall fitness have a profound influence on symptoms.

What Does It Feel Like?

- A deep aching pain in the groin, front of the hip, or inner thigh — often mistaken for a groin pull
- Pain in the buttock or outer hip (less typical, may indicate other causes)
- Stiffness — especially in the morning or after prolonged sitting
- Reduced range of motion — difficulty putting on shoes and socks, cutting toenails, or getting in and out of a car
- Pain with walking, especially after longer distances
- A limp that worsens with fatigue
- Grinding or crunching sensation in the joint

What Makes It Worse?

- Prolonged walking or standing
- Going up and down stairs
- Getting up from a low chair or car seat
- Cold or damp weather for many patients
- Being overweight — significantly increases joint load with every step

How Did This Happen?

- Age-related cartilage wear — the most common cause
- Prior hip injury, fracture, or dislocation
- Hip dysplasia — a shallow socket that increases cartilage stress
- Hip impingement (FAI) — bony abnormalities causing cartilage damage over time
- Obesity and genetics

When Should I Be Concerned?

- Sudden severe pain after a fall — possible fracture
- Groin pain with fever and swelling — possible joint infection
- Rapid worsening despite treatment

The Good News

Hip OA is very manageable with physical therapy. Strengthening the hip abductors, extensors, and core reduces joint loading with every step, often dramatically reducing pain. Exercise is among the most effective treatments available — and is far safer than long-term medication use.

Research consistently confirms that **movement is medicine** for hip OA — the right exercise program reduces pain and improves function as effectively as many interventions.

This information is for general educational purposes only and is not a substitute for a professional evaluation. Call us today — we have immediate openings with no waitlist.

Call (781) 769-2040 • Book online at www.ptandsr.com