

# Hip Replacement Boasts New Technology

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The crippling effects of hip arthritis cannot be overstated. Although often slowly progressive in nature, the pain eventually forces patients to give up the activities, sports and hobbies that they need to lead a fulfilling life. In the end stages of the disease, hip arthritis will often prevent patients from performing even the most basic tasks; those activities of daily living that we need to execute to get through a day (getting out of bed, using the bathroom, getting in and out of a car and walking).

Historically, Total Hip Arthroplasty (THA), or hip replacement surgery, has been an outstanding option for patients suffering from the end stage effects of the disease. Because of problems with component loosening and bearing surface wear and subsequent need for revision (repeat) surgery, the procedure was reserved for patients in their last decade or two of life (generally, patients 70 and older). The problem with loosening has been improved dramatically with the de-

velopment of uncemented, porous press-fit components. These components, instead of being "glued" into the patient's bone with a special bone cement, are press-fit into the bone, allowing the bone to grow into the component's pores, just like fracture healing. The result is a much more dynamic and longer lasting bond between the bone and hip replacement components.

Bearing surface wear has remained a problem and the relative "weak-link" in the chain of hip replacement longevity. The classic articulation, or bearing, is a metal ball and a polyethylene (special type of plastic) socket. Eventually, the plastic socket will wear out. This wear can lead to multiple problems, the most common and important of which is local bone thinning and loss (called osteolysis). Osteolysis eventually will lead to component loosening and subsequent failure, requiring revision surgery.

Harder, more highly polished bearings have been developed to deal with these wear problems. Ceramics have been shown to have the lowest wear rates available. By offering a more highly polished and harder bearing surface, ceramic bearing THA has allowed younger adult patients who suffer from the effects of hip arthritis to return to their normal activities, without significant restrictions. Now, with these new bearings available, patients have a much better chance of avoiding a revision hip replacement later in life.

If you suffer from x-ray and clinically-proven hip arthritis then you may be a candidate for hip replacement with ceramic bearings. These dramatic improvements in hip replacement surgery have allowed the patient to get back to doing what he or she loves to do; free from pain and stiffness, with greater longevity and long-term success.



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