

What is Hip Impingement? An Educational Guide



Also known as femoroacetabular impingement (FAI), hip impingement syndrome is a condition with various causes from birth defects to traumatic injuries. In simpler terms, we could say that it is a condition in which the ball and socket hip joint does not move smoothly due to a structural defect. The defect could either be in the femoral head or the socket.

For the proper functioning of the hip joint, perfect fitting between the ball and socket is important. If this is not the case, then with every hip movement, the person will experience difficulty in the form of pain or locking of the hip joint. This is what occurs in the case of hip impingement.

In severe cases of hip impingement syndrome, there may arise a need for hip replacement.

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This post will talk about hip impingement in detail along with its symptoms, causes, and diagnosis.

What Are the Symptoms of Hip Impingement?

Just like many other orthopedic conditions, hip impingement syndrome also does not show symptoms in its early stages. This could be from months to years. Hence, the condition is difficult to diagnose in its early stages in many patients.

When it comes to the most common cause of hip impingement, then it is groin pain. This is often the first symptom experienced by the person. Groin pain then causes other symptoms and they may include:

Limping

Reduced range of motion of the hip joint

Difficulty in climbing stairs

Loss of balance

Hip stiffness

Difficulty in hip flexion

What Are the Causes of Hip Impingement?

Hip impingement is caused by the deformity of the femoral head or the socket. This disrupts the normal movement of the hip joint and over time, damage to the cartilage is experienced.

Deformity in the hip joint may occur due to improper development of the hip during adolescence or as a result of a birth defect. Besides this, trauma can also cause hip impingement.

In many cases, hip impingement may also be caused by hip labral tears, especially in men. Besides this, other causes of the condition may include:

Legg-Calves-Perthes disease

Slipped Capital Femoral Epiphysis

Coxa Vara

How is Hip Impingement Diagnosed?

The diagnosis of hip impingement syndrome is often done based on your description of the symptoms experienced. To check any visible symptoms and the reduced range of motion, the doctor will perform a physical examination. This will give an idea about the cause and severity of the condition, but for confirmation, imaging tests are required. The tests that may be ordered by the doctor include:

X-ray

MRI

CT scan

What is the Treatment for Hip Impingement Syndrome?

The treatment of the condition varies according to its severity and the cause. In non-serious cases, resting of the affected hip along with physical therapy and medications like analgesics and NSAIDs can improve symptoms. But in some cases, these don't work and the doctor suggests surgery for the treatment. It is noticed that arthroscopic surgery is often done for the treatment of hip impingement syndrome. If the condition results in too much damage to the hip joint, hip replacement surgery is suggested.

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