

What are the advantages of minimally invasive surgery for hip replacement?

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The information provided in this article is meant to inform the patient on Minimally Invasive Surgery for hip replacement. Your orthopedic surgeon should explain to you which hip replacement is best for you and why

With the evolution of new surgical methods, better anesthesia techniques, and computer navigation systems, surgeons are now able to reduce recovery times after hip replacement. The effects of such methods and technologies allow the surgeon to operate with greater precision and less injury to the body. Minimally Invasive Surgery for Joint Replacement (MIS) is one surgical approach with this goal in mind.

The term, however, can be misleading. In a broad sense, minimally invasive surgery for hip replacement refers to a surgical method that uses a smaller incision. Many surgeons have this goal in mind already, and incorporate it into the existing techniques for a traditional hip replacement. An article put out by the University of Missouri-Columbia School of Medicine reads:

"Minimally invasive surgery variations of both the posterior approach and the lateral approach are popular today, and these involve re-training surgeons to learn how to do the same approach using a smaller skin opening. Most surgeons refer to an incision that is 4 inches or less in length as "minimally invasive."

But there are new surgical methods, also called minimally invasive, which go beyond making the smaller incision. These new surgical methods avoid cutting into the muscle altogether, which distinguishes them from traditional methods. Fewer surgeons are trained in these methods and special instruments and implants are required. One example is the MIS-2 incision hip replacement. The same article put out by the University of Missouri-Columbia School of Medicine describes the difference between a surgical method that makes a smaller incision and the MIS-2:

"What is new is the adaptation of this previously described pathway of reaching the hip joint to a new method of performing hip replacement surgery using two incisions that are very small. More important than the incision size or number is the fact that under the skin, the muscles are spread in their natural planes. The surgeon navigates a path around the muscles, without cutting into them."

The advantage of any minimally invasive surgery is less injury to the body. With more radical approaches, such as MIS-2 incision, there is reduced trauma to the deep muscle tissues and underlying structure of the hip. Because of the reduced trauma, patients feel better and recover faster. However, always remember that the size of the incision will be dictated by the size of the implants and the need to be able to manipulate them inside the joint to get the optimal positioning. Getting accurate positioning is key to the success of the entire procedure. The physicians at the University of Missouri-Columbia School of Medicine write:

"With modern hip replacement surgeries, the person is encouraged to become mobile much earlier than with standard methods of hip replacements. Many people are able to get out of bed either the same day or the next day, with the help of a physical therapist. In many cases outpatient therapy is not necessary, although it can help certain patients."

This should not give the reader the impression that minimally invasive surgical techniques are free of risks and complications. Blood-clots, for example, still occur and surgeons must apply methods to reduce them. In addition, most surgeons will still restrict the patient for six weeks after the surgery.

Keep in mind that all surgery is invasive to the body. These new surgical techniques merely reduce injury and trauma. If you believe you may be a candidate for minimally invasive hip replacement surgery, do research, talk with doctors, and always weigh the short-term benefits and the long-term results.