

Innovations

At New England Baptist Hospital

Hip Resurfacing: For Younger Patients, a Promising Alternative

According to the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons, an estimated 220,000 Americans have total hip replacement surgery each year. Close to 25% of those procedures are performed on patients under age 60. Total hip implants often last as long as 20 years, but the fact remains that many younger patients will eventually require hip revision surgery—essentially a second total hip. Revision surgery represents a surgical challenge because

much of the bone needed to create a total joint is removed at the time of the original surgery.

Today, younger patients have a new surgical option, called hip resurfacing, that may forestall and even prevent, the need for total hip replacement.

Approved for use in the U.S. in 2006, hip resurfacing has been impressing European patients for nearly a decade. Carl Talmo, MD, an orthopedic surgeon at New England Baptist Hospital, is one of a handful of surgeons in the region trained to perform the procedure.

“Hip resurfacing preserves bone by reshaping the damaged ends of the joint and securing metal composite caps on both sides of the joint to provide normal ball-socket function,” Talmo explains. “Unlike total hip replacement surgery, which removes the hip joint, resurfacing allows us to preserve the femur.”

Good candidates for hip resurfacing are men under age 60 and women under 55.

“Older women run a greater risk of fracture of the femur because they lose bone mass during menopause,” Talmo explains.

“Since a fractured femur would necessitate a total hip replacement, women over age 55 are better off having the entire hip joint removed and replaced with a prosthetic implant.”

For Jeffrey Stewart, 42, a Derry, NH resident,

hip resurfacing was the option that gave him back his life. A former athlete and bodybuilder and a painter by trade, Stewart was virtually debilitated by hip pain due to arthritis. “From the time I was in my twenties, I suffered from pain in my hip,” Stewart says. “I knew it was probably degenerative from the sports I played in high school and college, but I didn’t know how bad it would get.”

By age 40, Stewart says he could barely function. Relying on anti-inflammatory medication to manage the pain, he limped up and down ladders to paint houses, then returned home to spend the evening in a recliner, unable to move—or even drive—without excruciating pain.

Online research led him to the Baptist. Stewart arrived armed with information and questions about his options, including hip resurfacing. “Because I am relatively young and had been very active, I was eager to discuss options that would allow me the best chance of getting my life back.”

Dr. Talmo performed the surgery in January 2007, and Stewart used crutches for the first 6 weeks after the surgery. Stewart understood that his surgery required restrictions. “I was still functioning on the same hip, not a new one, so I only put half of my weight onto my left side for a period of time.” But by early spring, Stewart was getting his life back—painting houses, working out, spending time with his two teenage daughters and country line dancing—activities he had surrendered because of his hip pain.

While hip resurfacing can eliminate pain and restore healthy joint function, Talmo emphasizes that because it’s relatively new, there isn’t yet data to predict the longevity of the resurfacing prosthetics. “We are optimistic that it may give patients at least an additional 10 years,” he says.

Less concerned with the future, Stewart focuses on his life today. “I’m amazed, every day, by how great I feel. It can’t get any better than this!”