

Need to Know for Patients and Families

*What patients
and their
families need to
know about
care after hip
fracture
surgery*

Care after Hip Fracture Surgery

Definition: Most hip fractures occur due to either a break (1) where the ball of the 'ball and socket' hip joint breaks off the top of the femur/thigh bone (femoral neck fracture), or (2) just below the femoral neck (intertrochanteric hip fracture). Many are caused by osteoporosis resulting in weakened bones or falls. Most hip fractures are surgically repaired; the type of surgery depends on the type of fracture.

Getting Comfortable: Why Is It Important? You will need to have good pain control after surgery so you can move more and sleep well, both important in the healing and recovery process. Walking, repositioning while in a chair or bed, and taking deep breaths help prevent complications. It is normal to have some soreness for the first few months. The soreness is worse in the first few days and then gets better over time. If pain or soreness keeps you from moving or sleeping, speak with your health care team.

You Play a Key Role - What You Can Do:

1. Know what your pain medicines are and how often you should take them.
2. Take your pain medicine as prescribed. Tell your nurse or doctor if you have worries or concerns about pain medicine.
3. Let your nurse or doctor know if the pain medicine is not working. Changes may be made so that it will work better for you.
4. Take pain medicine before the pain gets bad or more intense. Pain medicine works better that way.
5. Move around frequently as recommended. You may have some pain when you first move, but this will get better more quickly if you stay active.
6. Balance activity with rest periods. Don't let yourself get overtired.
7. If you are having trouble sleeping or doing an activity due to pain take your pain medicine one hour before bedtime or before the activity.
8. Ice may help with soreness. Place an ice pack wrapped in a towel on your sore hip for up to 20 minutes at a time. Wait at least an hour before placing the ice pack on again. Too much ice time can slow healing.
9. Distract yourself with visitors, watching movies or doing quiet hobbies.
10. Take long, slow, deep breaths in and out to relax your muscles.
11. Think positively. You will get a little better each day!

If your pain becomes suddenly worse let your nurse/doctor know right away.

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Preventing Problems after Hip Fracture Surgery

Why Is It Important? After a broken hip there are some problems that may occur. These include constipation, delirium, infection, blood clots and future fractures. You can help prevent these from happening.

What You Can Do:

Be aware of the signs of problems and how you can prevent them.

1. CONSTIPATION: What are the signs? Going for three days without a bowel movement. Straining to have a bowel movement. Having hard, small bowel movements. Stomach pain or discomfort, nausea, vomiting, or decreased appetite.

How can I prevent it? Be active, move around. Drink plenty of fluids. Eat a high fiber diet: bran, prunes, whole grains, fruits, and vegetables. Take laxatives if needed. Ask your nurse, doctor or pharmacist about best choices. If prescribed narcotics for pain, ask about stool softeners and/or laxatives.

2. DELIRIUM: What are the signs? New onset confusion. Fluctuation in mental status. More difficulty concentrating or thinking. Feeling unusually drowsy or restless.

How can I prevent it? Have a clock and calendar near you. Wear your glasses and/or hearing aids. Get enough sleep each night. If you have pain, take medicine as prescribed. Limit alcohol intake. Have familiar people and/or photos around you.

3. INFECTION: What are the signs? A fever and/or delirium may signal an infection.

- **WOUND** - Redness, swelling, or pain at incision site. Odor, drainage, or pus at the incision site
- **BLADDER** - Frequent urination, burning pain or discomfort during urination
- **CHEST** - Coughing and/or green or yellow phlegm

How can I prevent it? Wash your hands often and ask others to do the same. Eat a healthy diet. Don't smoke.

- **WOUND** - Keep your incision clean and dry. Do not get the area wet until completely healed. If you have a dressing on your incision, follow the health care provider's instructions regarding care.

- **BLADDER** - Drink six-eight glasses of water each day (unless contraindicated). Go to the bathroom often; don't hold urine or wait to go.

- **CHEST** - Breathe deeply and cough if congested

4. BLOOD CLOTS: What are the signs? Red, tender, or painful calf/lower leg. Swollen or shiny calf/lower leg. Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath.

How can I prevent it? Move frequently, walk, and do your exercises. Take your blood thinning medication as prescribed. If you are at home and see signs of a blood clot, seek IMMEDIATE medical attention.

5. PREVENTING FUTURE FRACTURES. Having had one fracture increases your risk for another fracture. Ask your health care provider about how to prevent future fractures.

What should I do if I think I have any of these complications?

Contact your health care provider right away!