



Hip Replacement: The Anterior Approach Advantage

Has pain from osteoarthritis, injury, fracture or bone tumors made you consider hip replacement surgery? If so, you may be a candidate for a minimally invasive surgery called total hip arthroplasty with the anterior approach, also known as the anterior hip replacement.

What Advantages Does the Anterior Approach Offer?

“In a traditional hip replacement, the surgeon makes a 6- to 8-inch incision over the side of the hip and replaces the diseased joint with a new, artificial one,” says Dr. Scott Mox, Orthopedic Surgeon on the Medical Staff at Sherman Health. “With an anterior hip replacement, the surgeon replaces the hip by making a 3- to 5-inch incision at the front of the hip, which avoids separating the muscles and their attachments to the leg bones.”

Compared to traditional hip replacement surgery, a patient who has hip replacement surgery using the anterior approach can expect:

- Less muscle damage
- Shorter length of stay in the hospital
- Less post-surgical pain
- Shorter recovery time

This means that patients can get back to doing the things they love to do, and have likely missed doing, before they had their surgery.

Patient Experiences

For a year and a half prior to surgery, Albert Hicks dealt with daily muscle discomfort in his right hip and leg and walked with a limp. X-rays revealed he had bone-on-bone contact in his hip and needed a hip replacement.

Hicks had anterior hip replacement surgery with Dr. Mox at Sherman Hospital on a Tuesday morning. Later that afternoon, the nurses had him out of bed and walking short distances. On Wednesday, he was walking back and forth to the nurses’ station, and by Friday, he was home.

“I couldn’t have been more pleased with the surgery and care I received at Sherman,” says Hicks. “I knew the recovery with the anterior approach was quicker, but I was pleasantly surprised at how quick it really was.”

Hicks has friends who had traditional hip replacement surgery, and their post-surgery recovery and rehabilitation time spanned three to four months. After two weeks of home care provided by Sherman Home Care Partners, Hicks was off pain medication and riding a stationary bike with Dr. Mox’s approval.

Anterior hip replacement surgery offers advantages in the recovery process compared to traditional hip replacement. For example, a traditional patient is cautioned not to bend past 90 degrees of the hip or cross their legs.

“When the at-home physical therapist saw me bend down to tie my shoes during her visit the day after I got home she said, ‘Hey, you’re not supposed to be doing that,’” Hicks says. “Even she was surprised at how quickly I was recovering.”

Two weeks following surgery, Hicks was driving, and at three weeks he was walking 1.5 miles. At four weeks, he was even joining his wife on bike rides on the trails and open roads in Marengo.

Joanne Harlan also opted for the anterior approach with Dr. Mox. Her short length of stay and quick recovery mirror Hicks’ experience. However, Harlan did not need physical therapy beyond what her home health plan provided. The active 81-year-old was back to work serving customers at a local grocery store within six weeks of surgery.

“The hip is just amazing,” says Harlan. “The pain before surgery was so terrible. I’m thankful for it every day.”

Are You a Candidate?

Not everyone has the option of anterior hip replacement. “Candidates for the anterior approach are usually active seniors, of normal weight, and in good general health,” says Dr. Mox.

If you’re considering hip replacement surgery, talk with your orthopedic surgeon about his or her experience with minimally invasive anterior hip replacement. Ask about its risks and benefits for you.

About the Doctor



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