

Avascular Necrosis

There are numerous causes of hip pain, ranging from arthritis to bursitis to tendonitis. Avascular necrosis is a disorder that is not as common as the others. It is caused when the head of the femur or the "ball" of the hip's ball-and-socket joint is deprived of blood. This results in the deterioration and weakening of the bone, which creates a painful hip joint. Often with this pain, people avoid using the hip, thus creating weakness in the hip musculature. After the breakdown of bone, the cartilage in the hip joint loses its smoothness and arthritis progresses.

Avascular necrosis can occur from a direct injury or an abnormality in the circulation to the hip joint. Alcoholism and steroid use can also cause avascular necrosis to develop. There may be few warning signs of avascular necrosis and they can be confused with symptoms of other hip joint disorders such as arthritis. Aching groin pain and pain with walking may be present. An X-ray or MRI may be used for diagnosis.

Immediate treatment may include anti-inflammatory medication and the use of crutches to reduce weight bearing. Hip replacement surgery is usually the long-term treatment option. This surgery removes the necrotic or damaged bone and replaces it with a plastic or metal piece that is shaped like the natural bone. This artificial piece fits into the socket or acetabulum on the pelvic bone. A bone graft is also possible, holes are drilled into the damaged bone and healthy bone is inserted.

The above is intended as general information only. Be sure to contact your physician for advice or your own specific medical problems.