

# Patient Information for Consent

Kathryn Gill

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## OS08 Internal Fixation of a Hip Fracture

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## Information about COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

Hospitals have robust infection control procedures in place. However, you could still catch coronavirus either before you go to hospital or once you are there. If you have coronavirus at the time of your procedure, this could affect your recovery. It may increase your risk of pneumonia and in rare cases even death. The level of risk varies depending on factors such as age, weight, ethnicity and underlying health conditions. Your healthcare team may be able to tell you if these are higher or lower for you. Talk to your surgeon about the balance of risk between going ahead with your procedure and waiting until the pandemic is over (this could be many months).

Please visit <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus> for up-to-date information.

## Information about your procedure

It is essential that your surgery goes ahead as soon as possible. Following the Covid-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, some of the hospital processes have changed. You will need a coronavirus test before your procedure. The procedure may need to go ahead before the results are available. Your healthcare team can talk to you about the risks of having your procedure if you have coronavirus.

Coronavirus spreads easily from person to person. The most common way that people catch it is by touching their face after they have touched anyone or anything that has the virus on it.

If possible, wash your hands with alcoholic gel or soap and water when you enter the hospital, at regular intervals after that, and when you move from one part of the hospital to another.

Even if you have had the first or both doses of a Covid vaccine, you will still need to practise social distancing, hand washing and wear a face covering when required.

If your healthcare team need to be close to you, they will wear personal protective equipment (PPE). If you can't hear what they are saying because of their PPE, ask them to repeat it until you can. Chairs and beds will be spaced apart. You may not be allowed visitors, or your visiting may be restricted.

Your surgery is essential and the hospital and health professionals looking after you are well equipped to perform it in a safe and clean environment. Guidance about coronavirus may change quickly - your healthcare team will have the most up-to-date information.

## What is a hip fracture?

A hip fracture is a break of the top of the femur, just below your hip joint. It is also known as a fractured neck of femur. The fracture may be near the top of the neck (subcapital) or further down (intertrochanteric or subtrochanteric).

Your surgeon has recommended an operation to treat your broken hip. However, it is your decision to go ahead with the operation or not.

This document will give you information about the benefits and risks to help you to make an informed decision. If you have any questions that this document does not answer, it is important that you ask your surgeon or the healthcare team.

Once all your questions have been answered and you feel ready to go ahead with the procedure, you will be asked to sign the informed consent form. This is the final step in the decision-making process. However, you can still change your mind at any point before the procedure.

## How does a hip fracture happen?

Most hip fractures happen to older people caused by a simple fall or trip. The reason is usually osteoporosis (brittle bones). Hip fractures can happen to younger people due to a severe injury, such as those caused by a road accident.

## What are the benefits of surgery?

Your pain should improve more quickly and you should be able to use your leg sooner.

## Are there any alternatives to surgery?

If your hip fracture is in a good position, it may heal without surgery. However, if the fracture moves out of position you may need a larger operation.

## What will happen if I decide not to have the operation?

You will be treated with painkillers until you are able to get up comfortably. You may need to stay in hospital for a long time. This can lead to complications such as blood clots, chest infection and pressure sores. You will need physiotherapy to learn to walk again because your muscles will have become weak after spending such a long time in bed. It is unlikely that you will be able to walk as well as you did before your injury.

## What does the operation involve?

The healthcare team will carry out a number of checks to make sure you have the operation you came in for and on the correct side. You can help by confirming to your surgeon and the healthcare team your name and the operation you are having.

Various anaesthetic techniques are possible. Your anaesthetist will discuss the options with you. You may also have injections of local anaesthetic to help with the pain after the operation. You may be given antibiotics during the operation to reduce the risk of infection.

The operation usually takes 30 minutes to an hour. Your surgeon will make a cut on the outside of your thigh. They will fix the pieces of bone together using a strong metal implant. There are a few different types of implant and your surgeon will discuss which sort is most appropriate for you. If you have a subcapital hip fracture with the bones in a good position, your surgeon will usually use screws.

If you have an intertrochanteric or subtrochanteric fracture, your surgeon will use a dynamic hip screw or an intramedullary nail. Your surgeon will close your skin with stitches or clips.

## What should I do about my medication?

Make sure your healthcare team knows about all the medication you take and follow their advice. This includes all blood-thinning medication as well as herbal and complementary remedies, dietary supplements, and medication you can buy over the counter.

Anti-inflammatory painkillers may prevent the fracture from healing properly, so it is better not to take these if possible.

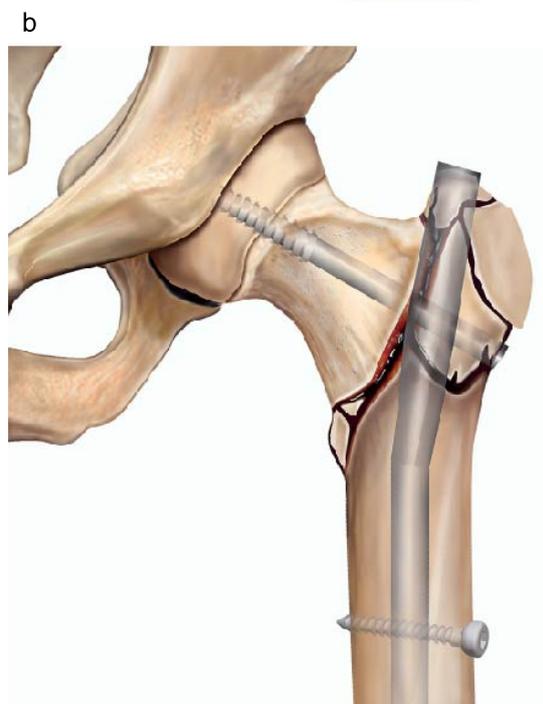


A subcapital hip fracture fixed with screws

## What can I do to help make the operation a success?

If you smoke, stopping smoking may reduce your risk of developing complications and will improve your long-term health. Nicotine is known to stop fractures from healing.

Regular exercise should help you to recover and improve your long-term health. Before you start exercising, ask the healthcare team or your GP for advice.



a A dynamic hip screw

b An intramedullary nail

You can reduce your risk of infection in a surgical wound by keeping warm around the time of the operation. Let the healthcare team know if you feel cold.

## What complications can happen?

The healthcare team will try to reduce the risk of complications.

Any numbers which relate to risk are from studies of people who have had this operation. Your doctor may be able to tell you if the risk of a complication is higher or lower for you.

Some complications can be serious.

You should ask your doctor if there is anything you do not understand.

Your anaesthetist will be able to discuss with you the possible complications of having an anaesthetic.

## General complications of any operation

- Pain. The healthcare team will give you medication to control the pain and it is important that you take it as you are told so you can move about as advised.
- Bleeding during or after the operation. You may need a blood transfusion.
- Unsightly scarring of your skin, although the cut usually heals to a neat scar.
- Difficulty passing urine. You may need a catheter (tube) in your bladder for 1 to 2 days.
- Infection of the surgical site (wound) (risk: 1 in 60). It is usually safe to shower after 2 days but you should check with the healthcare team. Keep your wound dry and covered. Let the healthcare team know if you get a high temperature, notice pus in your wound, or if your wound becomes red, sore or painful. An infection usually settles with antibiotics but you may need another operation.
- Allergic reaction to the equipment, materials or medication. The healthcare team is trained to detect and treat any reactions that might happen. Let your doctor know if you have any allergies or if you have reacted to any medication or tests in the past.
- Blood clot in your leg (deep-vein thrombosis – DVT) (risk: 1 in 150). This can cause pain, swelling or redness in your leg, or the veins near the surface of your leg to appear larger than normal. The healthcare team will assess your risk. They will encourage you to get out of bed soon after the operation and may give you injections, medication, or inflatable boots or special stockings to wear. Let the healthcare team know straightaway if you think you might have a DVT.

- Blood clot in your lung (pulmonary embolus), if a blood clot moves through your bloodstream to your lungs (risk: 1 in 100). Let the healthcare team know straightaway if you become short of breath, feel pain in your chest or upper back, or if you cough up blood. If you are at home, call an ambulance or go immediately to your nearest Emergency department.

- Urine infection (risk: 1 in 20). You may need antibiotics.
- Chest infection (risk: 1 in 10). You may need antibiotics and physiotherapy.
- Heart failure (risk: 1 in 30) or heart attack (where part of the heart muscle dies) (risk: 1 in 65). Sometimes this can cause death.
- Stroke (loss of brain function resulting from an interruption of the blood supply to your brain) (risk: 1 in 90). A stroke can sometimes cause death.
- Bleeding from your gut because the injury and surgery causes stress (risk: 1 in 125). If the bleeding does not stop you may need further treatment. Heavy bleeding can sometimes cause death.

## Specific complications of this operation

- Infection around the metal implant (risk: 1 in 100). This is a serious complication and you will usually need one or more further operations to control the infection. You may need to have the implant removed.
- Developing a collection of blood (haematoma) under your wound (risk: 1 in 60). If you get a large haematoma you may need another operation to drain it.
- Failure of the operation, if the bone is too soft to hold the implant. You will usually need another operation to fix the fracture again, or change to a hip replacement.
- Leg length difference because the pieces of bone push together as the fracture heals.
- Death sometimes happens after a broken hip (risk: 1 in 15). The risk is less the fitter you are.

## How soon will I recover?

### In hospital

After the operation you will be transferred to the recovery area and then to the ward. The physiotherapist will help you to start walking, usually the next day. At first, you will need to use crutches or a walking frame.

Keep your wound dry for 4 to 5 days, and use a waterproof dressing when you have a bath or shower.

The healthcare team will tell you if you need to have any stitches or clips removed, or dressings changed.

Some people are able to go home after 10 to 14 days but others need more rehabilitation. If your doctor recommends that you stay a little longer, you may be transferred to a rehabilitation ward.

Your occupational therapist will discuss with you your needs at home. They can arrange for you to have help with your daily activities, such as meals, bathing and shopping.

If you are worried about anything, in hospital or at home, contact the healthcare team. They should be able to reassure you or identify and treat any complications.

### Returning to normal activities

To reduce the risk of a blood clot, make sure you carefully follow the instructions of the healthcare team if you have been given medication or need to wear special stockings.

The healthcare team will tell you when you can return to normal activities.

Regular exercise should help you to return to normal activities as soon as possible. Before you start exercising, ask the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

Do not drive until you are confident about controlling your vehicle and always check your insurance policy and with your doctor.

### The future

Most people make a satisfactory recovery. It is usual for your hip to ache, although this often improves with time.

If you are slim, the metal implant can feel uncomfortable. You can sometimes have another operation to remove the implant but you will need to wait until the fracture has fully healed.

It usually takes about 6 months to recover fully from a hip fracture. If you had difficulty walking before your injury, it can be even harder afterwards. You may always need to use a walking aid.

Your doctor may recommend tests or further treatment to reduce the risk of another fracture.

- Looking into any cause for your fall, such as a dizzy spell or blackout.
- An exercise programme to improve your balance and muscle strength.
- Medication to make your bones stronger if you have osteoporosis.

### Summary

A hip fracture is a serious injury, especially for an older person. Surgery is almost always the best treatment and will help you to get back to some of or all your normal activities as soon as possible.

Surgery is usually safe and effective but complications can happen. You need to know about them to help you to make an informed decision about surgery. Knowing about them will also help to detect and treat any problems early.

[Keep this information document. Use it to help you if you need to talk to the healthcare team.](#)

Some information, such as risk and complication statistics, is taken from global studies and/or databases. Please ask your surgeon or doctor for more information about the risks that are specific to you.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant healthcare team would give you.

#### Acknowledgements

Reviewer: Stephen Milner (DM, FRCS (Tr & Orth))

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