

# Recovering from a hip fracture

Information for patients and carers



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This guide is intended to help you to understand the treatment and aftercare from your broken hip and how we can support your recovery and discharge from hospital as quickly and safely as possible.

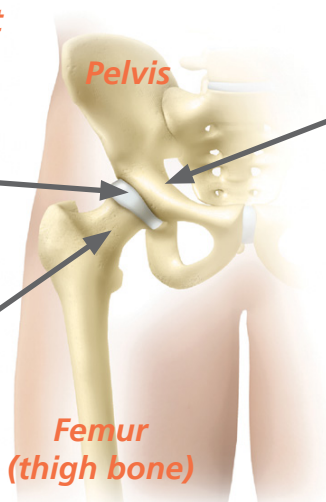
### **What is a broken hip (fractured neck of femur)?**

Having a broken hip is not uncommon: in the UK, there are about 70,000 cases every year and that number is rising as the population ages.

The bony part of your hip is made up of a ball and socket joint, the ball part is called the head of the femur and the socket is called the Acetabulum.

*This is the ball part of the hip joint properly known as the Head of the Femur*

*This is the neck of the Femur where most hip fractures occur*



*This is the socket part of the hip joint known as the Acetabulum*

As you can see from the diagram above, most hip fractures occur in the neck of the femur or in the bone below the neck.

## How is the fracture treated?

Unfortunately there is little option other than an operation (surgical repair) to help you to walk again. The type of surgery you receive will depend on which part of the bone is broken.

If the fracture is below the neck of the femur, the blood supply to the head of the femur should not be affected.

*There are two treatment options for this type of fracture:*

- A metal plate and screws (known as a Dynamic Hip Screw).

*The screw attaching the head of the femur to the plate*

*The plate screwed to the femur*



- An Intramedullary (IM) nail.

*Screws are used to secure the nail above and below the fracture*



If the fracture is in the neck of the femur, the blood supply to the head of the femur will be compromised, and a partial or total hip replacement will be necessary.

*This is a total hip replacement*



Your surgeon will discuss the treatment option that is best suited to you and the type of fracture you have before you have your operation.

### **What happens next?**

Now that you are in hospital, the most important thing for us is to make sure you are safe, comfortable and as pain free as possible, and to start preparing you for your operation and recovery.

### **Pain**

We will assess your pain level and give you pain controlling medicines, which might be in the form of tablets or liquid to swallow, injections or a nerve block (an injection close to the nerves in your hip to numb your leg). Whichever pain control method is considered to be most appropriate it is important that you tell us how well it is working. If you still have pain we may be able to add to or change the pain medicine.

*An assessment scale is used to measure your pain. The Nurses will ask you to rate your pain on a scale of 0-3:*

0 NO pain	1 mild pain	2 moderate pain	3 severe pain
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## Who will be looking after you?

*Your care team includes:*

### **Anaesthetist**

Anaesthetists are specially trained doctors who are responsible for giving your anaesthetic, controlling your pain during your operation and for your wellbeing and safety throughout your surgery.

### **Orthopaedic surgeon**

The Orthopaedic Surgeon will be responsible for treating your fractured hip by organising and performing the appropriate tests and surgery to repair your hip.

### **Ortho-geriatrician**

The Ortho-Geriatrician is a doctor who specialises in the care of older people who have suffered a hip fracture. They will ensure that any other medical conditions you may have such as diabetes or high blood pressure are managed appropriately before surgery and throughout your recovery and rehabilitation from surgery. The ortho-geriatrician will also assess your current bone health and decide on treatments and investigations where appropriate.

### **Physiotherapist**

The Physiotherapist will visit you daily for the first 7 days following your surgery. Rehabilitation will be tailored to your individual goals and will be carried out by all members of the multidisciplinary team.

The Physiotherapist will assess your mobility and provide a walking aid if appropriate to assist your recovery.

If required the Physiotherapist will assess you on stairs ensuring a safe and efficient technique.

You will be taught bed and chair exercises to help optimise your recovery and maximise your potential.

### **Occupational therapist**

The Occupational Therapist (OT) will discuss with you how you will manage your normal activities both on the ward and once you return home. This may include getting washed and dressed, getting on or off the toilet, bed and chair, getting in and out of the bath and kitchen activities. If you have any equipment needs, these will be addressed by your OT.

### **Ward nurses, nursing assistants, clinical support workers**

The nursing team will assess your needs and develop your plan of care in discussion with you and your family. This includes pain management, nutrition, hygiene and skin care. They will take care of your safety and wellbeing both before and after your surgery. You, your friends, family or carers should speak to the ward staff if you have any questions or concerns regarding any aspect of your treatment, care or discharge plan.

### **Trauma co-ordinator**

Specialist trauma co-ordinators will ensure that your surgery is scheduled when you are fit and well enough for the procedure.

### **Discharge co-ordinator and discharge facilitators:**

The discharge team will liaise with you, the ward team and relevant external agencies to ensure your discharge plan is appropriately and efficiently managed.

## **On the Ward**

Ward staff will monitor your pain and ensure you are as comfortable as possible. We will continue any treatments that were started in the Emergency Department and continue to prepare you for your surgery.

The surgical team will examine you and discuss the plan for surgery with you and your family.

## **Eating and drinking before your operation**

You will be encouraged to eat and drink normally until shortly before your surgery. It is important that you are well nourished and hydrated as this helps with your recovery. To help with this you may be prescribed supplement drinks to take in addition to your normal diet.

The ward nurses will give you instructions about when to stop eating and drinking in preparation for surgery (fast). Usually, you will be instructed to fast for two hours before surgery, although this may be longer to accommodate potential changes in theatre scheduling. An intra-venous drip will be started to keep you hydrated.

Sometimes, if your surgery is planned for the afternoon, you may have a light breakfast.

## **Maintaining normal body temperature**

Keeping warm before and after your surgery is important, as it may lower the risk of complications after your operation. It is important to tell the ward staff if you feel cold at any time. When you are able to get out of bed after surgery, you should ask your relatives or carers to bring in warm, comfortable clothing and well-fitting appropriate slippers/shoes to wear in the daytime. You can also keep warm by taking regular warm



drinks, and by walking to the toilet when you are able to do so safely.

### Going to the Toilet

You must remain in bed until after the operation. Male patients can use a urinal to pass urine; female patients will require a bedpan. This can be difficult and painful. Some patients are unable to pass urine. For these patients, a tube (catheter) is inserted into the bladder which allows the urine to drain into a bag. The catheter will be removed as soon as possible after the operation.

### Your anaesthetic

Before your operation, the anaesthetist will plan your anaesthetic with you.

There are two main anaesthetic options for hip fracture surgery, a general or a spinal anaesthetic. A general anaesthetic is where you are completely asleep for the operation, whereas a spinal anaesthetic (similar to an epidural) makes you numb from the belly button down. Some people worry about being awake with a spinal anaesthetic, although most people actually find they drift off to sleep once their pain has completely gone. However, don't be concerned about being awake, as your anaesthetist will provide sedation if required.

There are advantages and disadvantages with both types of anaesthetic. Whilst your preference will always be taken in to account, the presence of pre-existing health issues will mean that one technique may be safer.

Your anaesthetist will discuss this with you. They will also assess your general health and the anaesthetic most suitable for you, as well as explaining the benefits and risks of the options available.

### **Glasses, jewellery, dentures**

You can wear your glasses, hearing aids and dentures until you are in the anaesthetic room. If you cannot remove your jewellery, it can be covered with tape to prevent damage to it or to your skin. Wedding rings are not removed, and are covered with tape.

## **Your operation**

### **In the anaesthetic room**

When it is time for your surgery you will be taken on your bed, to the anaesthetic room. Several people will be there, including your Anaesthetist and an Anaesthetic Practitioner.

### ***Equipment will be attached to you to measure your:***

- Heart rate - three sticky patches on your chest (electrocardiogram or ECG)
- Blood pressure – a cuff on your arm
- Oxygen level in your blood – a clip on your finger (pulse oximeter)
- A small needle is used to put a thin soft plastic tube (a cannula) into a vein in the back of your hand or arm. Drugs and fluids can be given through this cannula.
- Finally, the type of anaesthetic chosen will be administered.

## Your surgery

Once your anaesthetic has been successfully started you will be taken into the operating theatre where your operation will be performed by the surgeon.

If you have a spinal anaesthetic you may be aware of several people moving around the room, this is normal, they are all there to make sure you are safe and that your operation goes well. You may also hear the noises made by some of the equipment used during the operation, again this is perfectly normal.

## In the recovery room

Once your operation is over you will be transferred to your bed and taken into the Recovery Room. You will stay in the Recovery Room until you are ready and safe to return to the ward.

Whilst in the Recovery Room the recovery team will make sure that you are as comfortable as possible and manage any pain you might have. They will check your blood pressure, pulse rate and breathing very regularly.

There will be a dressing on your hip wound, and you will have an intra-venous drip in place. Sometimes a blood transfusion is necessary if there is bleeding from your fracture site or if you are anaemic.

If you have had a spinal anaesthetic you may not be aware of the need to pass urine – this is normal, the sensation will come back once the anaesthetic wears off (4-6 hours). Occasionally a urinary catheter is inserted in theatre if you did not have one before surgery; this catheter will be removed as soon as possible after your operation.

## Back on the ward

You will be transferred back to the ward when the anaesthetist is confident it is safe for you to do so.

The ward nurses will continue to monitor your condition. They will assess your pain and administer appropriate pain medication. It is important that you tell your nurse if you feel the painkillers are not working properly. When you are fully awake, and if you are feeling well, you may have a drink and something light to eat.

## The recovery process

After your surgery we will expect you, where possible and with the help of the care team, to get out of bed. Getting out of bed and moving quickly after surgery will assist your recovery by helping to prevent complications such as chest problems and blood clots in your legs, and will help you start to feel more normal. Clinical evidence has shown that patients who are active soon after surgery can recover more quickly.

We will continue to monitor any pain that you might have and give you pain controlling treatments as appropriate.

You will be encouraged to eat and drink normally; however we do understand that for the first few days after your operation your appetite might not have fully returned. It is vital however, that you drink as much as you can manage, especially clear fluid such as water or fruit juice. This is especially important if you still have a catheter in place. You may be offered supplement drinks and/or snacks if appropriate.

## Constipation

Constipation can be a real problem after surgery, even more so if you were prone to constipation before you had your operation. Some pain killing drugs can cause constipation, but we want you to continue to take pain killers if necessary.

*There are several things you can do to help prevent constipation:*

1. Drink plenty of clear fluids.
2. Move around as much as possible, exercise really helps keep everything moving.
3. Try to eat plenty of fruit and vegetables.
4. Choose high fibre options when you can such as bran based cereals or wholemeal bread. If your appetite is not good, natural fruit juice, especially orange juice is naturally high in fibre.

## Looking after your skin

Long periods of reduced activity can make you more at risk of developing a bed sore (pressure ulcer). The nurses will check your skin regularly and assist you to change your position. You may be given a special pressure-relieving mattress. We would encourage you to change your position if you can and alert ward staff to any pain or soreness to your elbows, bottom or heels.

## Confusion

Confusion (delirium) can have a number of causes including pain, medications and painkillers, anaesthetic and surgery, infection, and loss of normal routine whilst in hospital.

A doctor or specialist nurse will perform memory tests regularly throughout your admission which will help to identify any problems and support getting you back to normal.

## Preventing a fall in hospital

As part of your rehabilitation, the ward staff and physiotherapist will assess how well you are able to stand and walk, and you will be given an appropriate walking aid, if necessary. They will show you the safest and most appropriate way for you to get in and out of bed, and move to chair or toilet.

To reduce your risk of a fall in hospital, it is important to wear the non-slip socks provided or appropriate footwear at all times when not in bed. If you are unsure if you are safe to move or walk independently, you must wait and use your call bell to ask the ward staff for assistance.

## Care of your Surgical Wound

### Stitches

In most cases, the surgical wound is closed using dissolvable stitches. These are pale in colour, do not need to be removed and usually disappear after a few weeks. Occasionally, small metal clips or dark coloured stitches are used. These will need to be removed, usually 12 days after the operation.

If you are discharged from hospital before this time, the ward will inform your GP and arrangements will be made for you to either attend your GP surgery if you are able, or for a District Nurse to remove the stitches or clips at home.

### Surgical Wound Dressing

The wound will be covered by a surgical dressing that should remain in place for 14 days following your surgery, unless there are stitches or clips that need to be removed. The dressing is waterproof, so you may shower if you wish.

At home, a bath is not advisable until the wound is fully healed. At 14 days, the dressing can be removed. The wound should be healed, and there is no need to replace the dressing. If you are already discharged home, you can do this yourself if you are able, or the ward can arrange for the District Nurse to visit you at home.

### **Wound Infection.**

*Surgical wound infections are uncommon:* only a small percentage of patients who have surgery for a broken hip will develop an infection.

A surgical wound infection can develop at any time from two to three days after surgery until the wound has healed (usually two to three weeks after the operation). Very occasionally, an infection can occur several months after an operation.

### **Signs of infection**

*Some redness and swelling are to be expected after surgery; however you may have an infection if you develop one or more of the following symptoms:*

- New excessive swelling and pain around your hip (not relieved by rest and pain killers.
- Your wound looks increasingly red, or it feels hot
- Your wound has a green or yellow coloured discharge (pus) or starts to bleed
- You feel generally unwell or feverish, or you have a temperature

On the ward, the nurses and doctors will monitor the wound regularly for signs of infection. After discharge from hospital, if you develop any of the above signs of infection, you must contact your GP without delay. Out of hours, attend your

nearest walk-in centre or A&E Department. If the wound is infected it is important that treatment is started as soon as possible.

**If the edges of the wound separate, and the wound is open, cover the wound with a suitable dressing if you have one available and attend A&E without delay.**

## **Your rehabilitation**

Our aim is to maximise your rehabilitation potential, therefore it is important that you take an active part in your rehabilitation.

You will be assessed with your daily activities such as feeding yourself, washing, dressing and using the toilet. The ward nurses will help you and your Occupational Therapist will work with you to make sure you can carry out all of these tasks safely and as independently as possible before you are discharged. It is helpful if your friends, family or carers are able to bring to the ward some loose, comfortable clothing and well-fitting slippers or shoes for you to wear in the daytime.

## **Exercises following surgery**

The number of repetitions for each exercise is provided here. However, it is important to let pain be your guide and only do as much as you are comfortable with. The physiotherapist will provide continued guidance on the ward.



**Aim to do the exercises three times a day.**

1. Take regular deep breaths to reduce the risk of a chest infection.
2. When lying or sitting, point your foot up and down within a comfortable range. Repeat 10-20 times.



3. Lying on a bed with your leg straight out in front of you. Gently tense your thigh muscle and try to flatten your knee into the supporting surface whilst pulling your toes towards you.



4. Lying on a bed with both legs straight. Bend your operated leg as far as you can then straighten it back out. Only bend your leg as far as you feel comfortable.



5. Lying on a bed with both legs straight. Slide your operated leg sideward as far as you can and then return back. Only move as far as you feel comfortable



6. Sit on a chair. Straighten your injured leg as far as you can then bend it back down.



## Mobility

### Walking

*The following steps describe how you will be taught to walk initially:*

1. Move your walking aid
2. Step forwards with your operated leg
3. Step to with your un-operated leg

### Stairs

#### *Going UP stairs*

1. First take a step up with your un-operated leg.
2. Then take a step up with your operated leg.
3. Then bring your crutch or stick up onto the step.
4. Always go one step at a time.
5. If there is a rail hold onto this with one hand and you will be shown how to hold your other crutch or stick.

#### *Going DOWN stairs*

1. First put your crutch or stick one step down.
2. Then take a step with your operated leg followed by your un-operated leg.
3. Always go one step at a time.
4. Do not discard your walking aid until instructed.

The Physiotherapist will monitor your progress and may provide you with a different walking aid as you develop or as appropriate.

## Preparing to return home

After surgery, it is important to start planning your discharge; the ward team will discuss your progress and the most appropriate plan with you and your relatives and carers. Our long term aim is to for you to return to your original place of residence as long as it is safe and in your best interests to do so.

***The ward team will discuss the safest option with you:***

- Discharge home with physiotherapy in an outpatient setting. To be considered for this option, you must not have any additional care needs and be able to independently attend the clinic.
- Discharge home with the support of the Neighbourhood Team (NHT): the NHT will provide continuing physiotherapy rehabilitation and assistance with care needs should you require this on-going support. To be considered for discharge home with NHT you must be able to get in and out of bed safely, and be safe between visits.
- Discharge to a Community Care Bed (CCB): the CCB service provides rehabilitation for patients who are well enough to be discharged, but are not yet safe to go directly home. CCB beds can be in designated Residential Homes, purpose built units, or in one of several ward areas at St James's Hospital.
- Patients who are not able to progress with rehabilitation will be considered for permanent placement in a Residential or Nursing Home.

You will receive a Discharge Folder containing the relevant information to take with you when you leave the ward.

***If you have any questions or concerns about your treatment and care, please do not hesitate to discuss them with your ward nurse, ward doctor, therapist or consultant.***

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