

Hip Fracture

Condition: A hip fracture refers to a break in the upper part of the femur (thigh bone).

Background: Many elderly patients fracture their hips due to falls. Therefore, fall prevention is crucial in the prevention of hip fractures. Balance training has been shown to be the best exercise to prevent falls. Additionally, a younger patient may suffer a hip fracture in a car accident or other trauma.

Risk Factors: Osteoporosis, which results in fragile bones, is present in the majority of patients with hip fractures. Other risk factors include: the use of many medications, difficulty walking, thinking difficulties, alcohol abuse, tobacco use, disorders involving nerves, and an unsafe home environment (loose rugs, clutter, poor lighting, wet surfaces, or exposed cords).

History and Symptoms: Most patients who have sustained a hip fracture report hip or groin pain after a fall.

Physical Examination: The physician will look for bruising, swelling and stiffness around the hip. Additionally, the injured leg might appear shorter and rotated in an abnormal position at rest.

Diagnosis Process: X-rays will identify the majority of hip fractures.

Rehab Management: The choice of surgical repair will depend on the type and location of the fracture. After surgery, patients will be encouraged to begin to move in and out of bed, initially with the assistance of the nursing and rehabilitation staff. Depending on the type of surgery performed, the patient will be instructed on safety with walking and safety within the home. This may include education about how much weight to put on the leg, what positions to avoid and the use of any specialized equipment. The physical medicine and rehabilitation (PM&R) physician will work with a group of specialized health care workers that may include nurses, physical therapists, occupational therapists, social workers, and case managers to help patients successfully recover from the fracture, regain the ability to walk safely, and prevent future falls. The PM&R physician can manage pain, and prevent complications from surgery including blood clots and infections.

Other Resources for Patients and Families: The patient and caregiver must understand all precautions and restrictions, and how to be safe at home while recovering. If the patient is older with dementia, rehabilitation can be challenging. The [Alzheimer's Association](http://www.alzheimers.org) offers resources that may help.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is PM&R?

Physical medicine and rehabilitation (PM&R), also known as physiatry, is a primary medical specialty that aims to enhance and restore functional ability and improve quality of life to those with injuries, physical impairments or disabilities affecting the brain, spinal cord, nerves, bones, joints, ligaments, muscles and tendons. PM&R physicians, known as physiatrists, evaluate and treat the whole body, maximize patients' independence in their daily life and are experts in designing comprehensive, patient-centered treatment plans to empower patients to achieve their goals. By taking the whole body into account, they can accurately pin-point problems, decrease pain, assist in recovery from devastating injuries and maximize overall outcomes and performance with non-surgical and peri-surgical options. To learn more, visit www.aapmr.org/aboutpmr.

What makes PM&R physicians unique?

PM&R physicians' training focuses not just on treating medical conditions, but on enhancing the patient's performance and quality of life in the context of those medical conditions. They focus not only on one part of the body, but instead on the development of a comprehensive program for putting the pieces of a person's life back together – medically, socially, emotionally and vocationally – after injury or disease. PM&R physicians make and manage medical diagnoses, design a treatment plan and prescribe the therapies that physical therapists or other allied therapists perform or that are carried out by the patients themselves. By providing an appropriate treatment plan, PM&R physicians help patients stay as active as possible at any age. Their broad medical expertise allows them to treat disabling conditions throughout a person's lifetime.

Why see a PM&R physician?

A PM&R physician will thoroughly assess your condition, needs, and expectations and rule out any serious medical illnesses to develop a treatment plan. By understanding your condition and goals, you and your PM&R physician can develop a treatment plan suited to your unique needs.

How do I find a PM&R physician near me?

Visit www.aapmr.org/findapmrphysician or contact your primary care physician for a referral.