



Common Causes of Hip Pain in Women

Does your hip ache? As with other types of chronic pain, women tend to experience it more than men. But because hip pain can have a number of different causes, determining the correct one is the key to getting the best treatment.

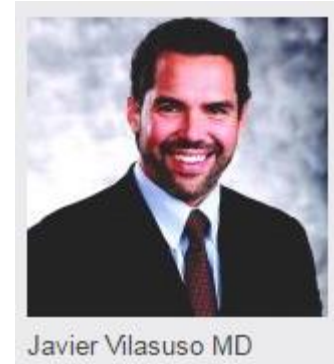


Dr. Derek Ochai

“In my practice, I do see more women than men for chronic hip pain,” says Dr. Derek Ochai, Hip Arthroscopy & Sports Medicine, Nirschl Orthopaedic Center. “This can be from a variety of causes, but one reason is that women are generally more flexible than men, and this increased motion can put more pressure on the hip joint. In addition, with body changes with pregnancy, this increased forward weight can increase pressure on the hip joint, sometimes leading to damage.”

“Sixty percent of patients who suffer from hip pain are women,” says Dr. Javier Vilasuso, Anesthesia Pain Care Consultants. “Hip pain tends to fall into three primary age categories for women.

The first category is high school to college aged women who are experiencing pain due to high impact sports or exercises. The second category is women in their twenties and thirties – in their child-bearing years when there are changes in their body and the effect of weight bearing due to pregnancy can cause hip pain and lastly women in their fifties and post-menopausal women who experience hip pain due to the decrease in bone mineralization and the onset of osteoporosis.”



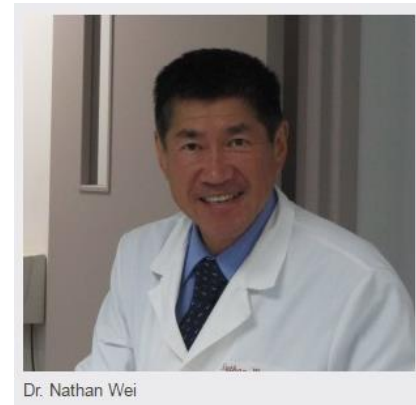
Javier Vilasuso MD

“Hip pain can be due to bursitis, tendonitis or arthritis,” says Dr. Nathan Wei, Arthritis Treatment Center. “The location, onset, aggravating, and relieving factors all help in making the diagnosis. The diagnosis points towards the correct therapy. One problem is that hip pain can be referred from the low back so it’s important to differentiate true hip pain from what we call, ‘referred pain.’”

How common is it for a gynecological issue such as endometriosis to present itself as “hip pain”? “I frequently get referrals from OB/GYN’s, as hip pain is typically in the groin area, and patients

sometimes see their OB/GYN to rule out a gynecologic cause of the pain, so frequently hip pain and GYN pelvic pain can be difficult to differentiate,” says Dr. Ochai.

“The primary cause of hip pain is hip arthritis,” says Dr. Ochai. “However, non-arthritis hip pain is being increasingly recognized. This can be from a labral tear in the hip, which is analogous to a meniscal or cartilage tear in the knee. This pain can mimic pain from hip arthritis. Nowadays, hip labral tears are known to be predominately caused by the way the hip develops abnormally during a person’s early teenage years. Many times, this can be effectively treated with physical therapy, hip injections, or both. If these measures fail, the labral tear and the cause of the labral tear can now be routinely addressed with a minimally invasive procedure (hip arthroscopy).”



Dr. Nathan Wei

What are the primary symptoms of hip pain? “Hip pain from the hip joint itself is normally in the groin (the crease of the leg when one is sitting),” says Dr. Ochai. “Normally, there is pain with sitting and twisting activities, such as getting in and out of cars. One may also notice a decrease in hip range of motion, such as increased difficulty putting on socks.”



How effective is exercising the hip joint with low impact exercises? “I am a big believer in exercise to help with hip pain,” says Dr. Ochai. “Core/gluteal strengthening can help to stabilize the hip, decreasing pressure on the hip joint. Also, any exercise that leads to weight loss will exponentially decrease pressure on the hip. Typically, the best exercises are elliptical trainer, stationary bike, and swimming.”

“Low impact exercises can be very helpful for mild to moderate hip pain,” says Dr. Vilasuso. “These exercises increase blood flow to the region and maintain range of motion and flexibility. Exercise such as walking, stationary bicycling, water aerobics, yoga and tai chi have been shown to improve flexibility of joints, strengthen muscles of the hip and lessen pain. Some exercises may need to be modified if a patient feels pain while performing them.”

Topical measures such as Salonpas can be effective,” says Dr. Wei. “Other forms of treatment include physical therapy, chiropractic, exercises, traction, oral anti-inflammatories and injections.”