



Living the Good Life

Could a minimally invasive hip or knee replacement change your life? For Patricia Mages, it made all the difference in the world

After many years as a competitive runner and avid cross-country skier, Patricia Mages prided herself on keeping fit. A bus accident when she was a 21-year-old nursing student left her with a fractured pelvis and a fractured hip socket, but orthopedic surgeons were able to put the pieces together and give her many years of good function. Nearly three decades later, however, the earlier damage to her pelvis finally caught up to her. Faced with a deteriorating arthritic hip, Mages, 50, knew she had to do something.

A New Procedure

Mages lives in Cheyenne, Wyo., where she works as a nurse practitioner in an obstetrics practice. Her hip had

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—Patricia Mages, minimally invasive anterior hip replacement patient

been progressively deteriorating for five years when she set out to find an alternative to the standard hip replacement surgery, which comes with a long recovery period. Months of research and scouring the Internet finally led her to Robert Greenhow, M.D., in Denver.

Greenhow and his partner, Craig Loucks, M.D., are two of only three surgeons in Colorado and the surrounding states who perform the minimally invasive anterior total-hip replacement procedure, the least invasive hip replacement procedure available today. It is a standard total hip replacement done through a 3- to 4-inch incision over the front of the hip without cutting any muscles or tendons.

Recovering from traditional hip replacement surgery can be a long, painful process. Surgeons create a long incision and cut muscles and tendons to access the hip joint. The more muscles cut, the longer it usually takes patients to heal. But with the minimally invasive anterior total hip replacement, surgeons use improved tools and techniques to avoid or separate muscles and tendons rather than cut them.

Under the Skin

In the last few years, there has been a lot of talk about minimally invasive hip replacement procedures and a considerable amount of confusion among patients who are unsure how the surgery may or may not benefit them.

Greenhow and Loucks believe that the emphasis in minimally invasive surgery should be on what happens under the skin. Many surgeons advertise minimally invasive techniques with shorter skin incisions that still involve cutting muscles or tendons. These other techniques are

often referred to as small-incision or mini-incision hip replacements and are not truly minimally invasive.

“The length of the skin incision does not determine the patient’s post-operative recovery time, pain, function or limitations,” Greenhow says. “It’s the avoidance of muscle detachment or muscle splitting that allows patients to enjoy the benefits of facilitated rehabilitation and a speedier return to normal activity.”

‘All the Difference in the World’

Mages and her husband made the trip from Cheyenne to Denver in April to consult with Greenhow and find out if she was a candidate for this procedure. The couple was pleased to hear that, unlike some of the other small-incision approaches, the anterior approach is applicable to nearly all primary hip replacement patients.

Mages underwent anterior hip replacement of her deteriorated hip joint later that month and has been delighted with her outcome. She drove back to Cheyenne with her husband two days after the surgery and was back to work full time in less than two weeks.

“I couldn’t believe how easy it was and how quickly I got back to work,” says Mages, now nearly four months past her surgery. “I got to walk out of the hospital two days after my surgery and was able to get rid of the cane within a few days. Being able to get back to my life so quickly has made all the difference in the world.”

Mages adds that she had put off traditional hip replacement surgery for as long as possible in hopes of finding an easier alternative. She couldn’t be happier today and is telling everyone she knows about the procedure and her success.

Tremendous Results

As the only two surgeons in the greater Denver area who offer the minimally invasive anterior total hip replacement, Greenhow and Loucks say they have seen tremendous results with the procedure. They continue to educate the public and other health-care professionals on the merits of the technique.

“There has been an evolution in hip replacement surgery over the past few years,” says Greenhow, who practices with Loucks at Orthopedic Surgery Associates, P.C., and has offices in Parker, Aurora, Lone Tree and Centennial. “However, the basic principles of hip replacement must remain the same: solid bone-implant fixation, anatomic positioning of implants, stability of the joint and uncompromised long-term results.”

Both doctors have performed traditional hip replacements and have had experience with most of the other mini- and small-incision hip replacement procedures. “It has been a natural evolution to now be doing the anterior hip replacement and the results are speaking for themselves,” Greenhow says.

Loucks adds that special training in the minimally invasive procedure is needed, as well as a \$150,000 operating table. “It took a little longer initially, but now we can do an anterior hip replacement in about



Patricia Mages, 50, says her life changed for the better after she received the minimally invasive anterior total-hip replacement procedure.

the same time as a traditional hip replacement,” he says. “But the advantages for the patient have made it all worthwhile.”

New Alternatives

For patients suffering from arthritis of the knee, there is also a minimally invasive alternative to traditional knee replacement surgery. Greenhow and Loucks are two of a handful of surgeons in Colorado who offer their patients the MIS Quad-Sparing™ total knee replacement. Like the hip surgery, this is a standard knee replacement done through a 4-inch incision, without cutting any muscle or tendons.

In particular, no cuts are made to the quadriceps muscle or tendon. Compared with traditional knee replacement surgery, this procedure typically results in less pain, less physical therapy, shorter hospital stays and a faster return to function.

“It is very important for patients to educate themselves on the different options available to them,” Greenhow says. “Patients need to focus on what their surgeons are doing under their skin rather than focusing on the size of the skin incision.” ■

Plan to Attend

Latest Advances in Minimally Invasive Hip and Knee Replacement Surgery

Date: Tuesday, Oct. 18

Time: 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Call (303) 269-4002 for details and to register.

Presented by Drs. Robert Greenhow and Craig Loucks of Orthopedic Surgery Associates, P.C.