

Atrium Health Musculoskeletal Institute 2022 Highlights Report

Hip Scopes Help 95%-97% of Athletes Return to Sport at Same Level or Higher

Athletic hip problems present many challenges for both patients and providers. Hip complaints are often migratory in place and time, causing pain to radiate to different parts of the body. For example, hip problems can cause pain in the lower back and buttocks, lateral hip pain, hip flexor pain or pain that radiates down the thigh. Physicians may find it difficult to provide an accurate diagnosis if the symptoms are always changing.

On average, athletes with hip complaints see two to three different specialists before they get an accurate diagnosis. When patients with hip issues are referred for physical therapy and imaging, the protocols may not be well established in some areas. In addition, there's a limited number of orthopedic physicians with experience in treating hip complaints.

Hip arthroscopy is a growing area of orthopedic medicine that's bringing lasting relief to many athletes. Eric Kropf, MD, adjunct associate professor with Wake Forest University School of Medicine and orthopedic surgeon with Atrium Health Musculoskeletal Institute, is the only provider offering hip arthroscopy in Union County, North Carolina. He brings 14 years of clinical practice in using this outpatient procedure to treat patients with hip complaints.

Joint Visualization and Repair

Hip arthroscopy involves inserting a scope and a camera into the hip joint for visualization. Through minimally invasive "poke-hole" incisions, the surgeon corrects the mechanical impingement that commonly occurs between the femur ball and socket and repairs the labral tear.

"Hip arthroscopy is one of the most technically challenging procedures to perform," Dr. Kropf explains. "To access the hip, you have to do traction and subluxate the joint. The triangulation has to be perfect, and the angle of approach must be accurate; everything has to be very precise."

Dr. Kropf can perform a complete hip scope and labral tear repair in less than 90 minutes.

High-Level Expertise and Advanced Imaging

Atrium Health Musculoskeletal Institute has high-level expertise at every step of the hip scope process, including diagnosis, imaging, surgical management and postoperative care. Patients with hip complaints benefit from our:

- Experienced primary care sports medicine physicians
- Advanced imaging technology, including 3 Tesla MRI
- Special X-rays and traction equipment
- Physical therapy and rehabilitation specialists who understand hip problems
- Facilities that perform high-volume hip arthroscopy

Exceptional Outcomes

According to Dr. Kropf, most patients recover exceptionally well after a hip scope. Many are able to start riding a bike in rehabilitation three days after the procedure. Three months later, most patients are back

to playing soccer, ice hockey or football without any pain. In fact, 95%-97% of athletes get back to their sport at the same level or higher.

“Hip scopes result in some of the best outcomes and recoveries as well as some of the most satisfied patients,” Dr. Kropf says. “Many of these athletes didn’t realize how stiff they were until after the procedure. They often feel like a new person, which is very rewarding.”

Hip scopes also help prevent arthritis. “If we can intervene when an athlete is in their late teens, we can alter the natural history of progression of a hip impingement, improving their long-term health and preventing arthritis,” he explains.