

# Patient Testimonial

## Years of Damage, Repaired in Hours *By: Rachael Epling*

When I was 21, I was hit head on in a car accident and fractured my pelvis. Following the accident, I spent many months doing extensive rehab. I wore a brace around my pelvis and put a lot of work in by means of intense physical therapy, Pilates, acupuncture, cupping, massage therapy, and strengthen my pelvis muscles. It worked for a while, but as the years ticked on, I began to experience more pain and limitations in my functions. As it turns out, I was diagnosed with **femoral acetabular impingement (FAI)**. My hip socket did not fully form when I was born and through it all, I remained very active in my youth.

Over the years, I stopped being able to do the activities I enjoyed. My pain increased and my function decreased. While at work one day, I stood up and shifted my weight to my right leg to walk - my leg buckled, and a sharp shooting pain went through my upper thigh and groin. This had become a common experience for me, the feeling as if my hip was popping with each step.

At that time, I was only 35 years old and had a hip that my surgeon said, “looked like a head of cauliflower.” I was diagnosed with a labral tear in addition to the FAI. Shortly afterwards, I underwent a hip arthroscopy to reshape the head of my femur, repairing, and reattaching the torn labrum and buying me some precious time. At the age of 35, I was told I was too young to have a hip replacement. So, life continued, and I kept pushing forward. I got back to exercising and all my favorite outdoor activities.

“However, little by little, I began to have increased pain and decreased function again.”

I had been told my hip scope would only shave off a replacement for 3-5 years, and even though I was a joint replacement nurse, I was still scared of the surgery. I had cared for patients undergoing primary and revision hip replacements in addition to the patients that had developed complications from the surgeries. I had seen first-hand the good, the bad, and the ugly. I knew I needed to have the surgery if I wanted any quality of life, but despite being so limited in my ability to function, I was still not ready.

I received multiple cortisone injections, trigger point injections, and radiofrequency procedures on my low back to reduce my pain, but when I was active, I suffered greatly. I got to the point that I could no longer sit, stand, or lay comfortably. I was in constant pain, feeling like I was sitting on jagged rocks. I was only sleeping a few hours a night, waking repeatedly. But it wasn't until I took inventory of my life, and what this pain and limited function had stolen from me, that I was finally ready to reclaim my life. I wanted to run and jump with my kids, to go hiking and biking, kayaking, and fishing. I wanted to play soccer and tennis with them again. Above all, I wanted to do these things and not pay the price of extreme pain for days afterwards or be scared that my hip would break during a simple change of direction when walking.

At 42 years old, I underwent a Total Hip Replacement via the anterior approach. My surgeon and I decided this was the best option for me because I wanted to be as active as possible following the procedure. I wanted my life back, and I was determined to get it.

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Following the surgery, I began physical therapy and soon found that my road to recovery was going to be a rough one. Not because of the surgery itself (I had a new hip that was perfectly fit for me and in an instant my FAI and arthritis were gone), but because I had waited so long to have it done! If I was going to get my life back, I was going to have to work for it. I had spent half my life in pain, 21 years letting my body become slowly debilitated by this hip. Don't let this be you! I am now 5 months out from surgery and back to ALL my former physical activities.

Within 2 months I was back to working 12 hour shifts at the hospital. Within 3 months I was going on hikes and biking with my family and within 4 months, I was back to the gym truly "working out" again! We played tennis last week and as the coach of my kids indoor and outdoor soccer teams, I am thrilled to be playing with them on the field again. This coming winter I plan on showing them they have a mom who can rip it on the slopes! Please, don't wait any longer, talk to your surgeon and reclaim your life, you won't regret it!