

An alternative to conventional hip replacement



Firefighter Marty Weeks at Waterloo fire station.

For over a decade Marty Weeks, 51, has struggled with severe pain in his left hip.

“In the last year it was to the point of beyond bearable,” said Weeks. “I had to get cortisone shots and take ibuprofen just to relieve the pain so I could go to work.”

Weeks lives in Hudson, but works in Waterloo as a firefighter – a demanding job that requires a lot of physical strength.

“The pain was so bad I didn’t feel I could do my job,” said Weeks. “It got to the point where if something happened, how good was I going to be if something went down in a fire – how strong was that leg going to be if I needed to pull someone or get myself out?”

Weeks researched his options and learned about a procedure called hip resurfacing. FDA approved since 2006, hip resurfacing is a bone conserving surgery, which allows most patients to maintain an active lifestyle after the procedure.

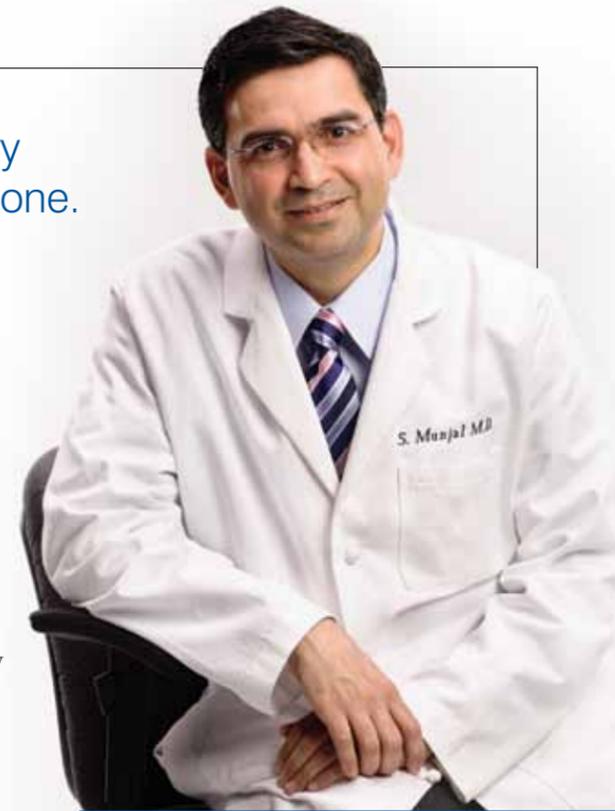
“I didn’t really want a total hip replacement because of my job,” said Weeks. “I knew with a total hip replacement my mobility would be limited. I wanted to do something different and I found out about hip resurfacing. I spoke with several firefighters across the country that had this surgery and decided it was the route I wanted to pursue.”

Hip resurfacing

Weeks learned that only a few surgeons in the U.S. performed hip resurfacing surgery on a regular basis. Sandeep Munjal, MD, an orthopaedic surgeon at Physicians’ Clinic of

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orthopaedic surgeon, Physicians’ Clinic of Iowa, P.C.



Iowa, P.C., was one of those surgeons – who performed the procedure at St. Luke’s Hospital.

Hip resurfacing is considered an alternative to total hip replacement for younger patients. Unlike traditional hip replacement surgery, resurfacing does not remove as much of the leg bone. The damaged surface of the hip joint is removed and a cap covers the ball-shaped bone at the top of the thigh, then a cup with a small stem is inserted into the top of the thigh bone.

“It’s essentially saving a lot of bone in case you need it down the line for revision surgery,” said Dr. Munjal.

Select patients

“Hip resurfacing is not for all patients,” said Dr. Munjal. “It is typically done on younger patients, with excellent bone stock and bad arthritis. Younger patients are more active, their demands are different and the prosthesis used in this surgery allows them to maintain an active lifestyle.”

Weeks drove from Hudson to meet with Dr. Munjal about hip resurfacing. Once it was determined Weeks was a good candidate for hip resurfacing he scheduled his surgery at St. Luke’s.

“During that initial meeting I told Dr. Munjal this is my one shot,”

said Weeks. “I told him I wanted to do this right because I love my job, I love going to work everyday as a firefighter. There are not many people, who can say that, but I do – for 20 years I’ve enjoyed going to work and I didn’t want that to end.”

What causes most hip pain is arthritis. The most common is osteoarthritis, which is when the cartilage that cushions the bones of the hip joint rubs against one another and wears away.

“Patients are candidates for either hip replacement or hip resurfacing surgery when they have exhausted all other treatment options,” said Dr. Munjal. “It is essentially a quality of life issue. Patients reach a point when the hip is painful and every step they take is painful.”

“The pain I experienced in my left hip would take my breath away,” said Weeks. “There were times I could barely walk and when I did I felt a sharp, stabbing pain. I knew I couldn’t continue living with the intense pain.”

Instant relief

On March 18, Weeks had his left hip resurfaced. Immediately after surgery he felt instant relief.

“A lot of patients will tell me in the recovery room after surgery that their hip pain is gone,” said Dr. Munjal. “I think hip resurfacing is one of the most rewarding surgeries. Arthritis in general is very disabling – people are in a lot of pain. The activities of daily living for these individuals are restricted because of their pain.”

“I would recommend hip resurfacing 100 percent,” said Weeks. “I can’t describe how awesome it is not to have that pain anymore.”

Weeks is preparing to return to the job he loves and fighting fires in the very near future.

■ To find out if hip replacement or hip resurfacing surgery is right for you, ask your doctor. To find a doctor, visit Find a Doctor at stlukescr.org.