Andrew Wolff, M.D., orthopedic surgeon, specializing in hip arthroscopy, hip preservation and sports medicine,Washington Orthopedics and Sports Medicine (WOSM).

HIP REPAIR WITHOUT HIP REPLACEMENT

For people whose hip pain is not caused by arthritis, surgery to repair rather than replace the hip is increasingly common. Often these preservation procedures are performed as very minimally invasive outpatient surgeries. Andrew Wolff, M.D., specializes in these advanced arthroscopic techniques. "About 10 years ago, we began repairing hips through little incisions, as opposed to replacing hips through big incisions," he notes. "We are able to relieve pain, prevent the hip from wearing out and needing to be replaced later, get people back to a normal daily life and let them resume sports and activities they've been missing."

"My patient, Tom Whelley, is a classic case of the most common arthroscopic hip preservation surgery. His story is a great example of what can be accomplished with 2014 techniques and technology."

Like many people with hip pain, the ball and socket of Whelley's hip did not fit together perfectly. "We call this impingement," Dr. Wolff explains. "It's like a square peg in a round hole. This puts extra pressure on the rim of the socket (the labrum), which is like a cartilage gasket seal encircling the socket. That pressure causes it to break down and tear away."

"When problems are not caused by arthritis, new ways to repair and preserve hips can be very successful."

— Andrew Wolff, M.D., orthopedic surgeon, Washington Orthopedics and Sports Medicine (WOSM)

"The arthroscopic procedure we perform corrects the damage that's been caused and also corrects the cause of the damage," says Dr. Wolff. He makes half-inch incisions around the hip and then re-contours the ball into a round shape that fits perfectly into the hip socket. Next, he repairs the torn rim and secures it onto the bone with suture anchors. Since the ball and socket are now a perfect match, the hip can heal and will not re-tear.

Recovery is faster and easier because arthroscopic surgery causes less trauma to the muscles around the hip. Since incisions are small, so are scars. Patients usually need pain medicine for just 24 hours, rather than days or weeks. "We get in, get out, fix the problem and send people home the same day," Dr. Wolff notes.

"I was in constant, mind-destroying pain for a year. I woke up from surgery and never felt the pain again."

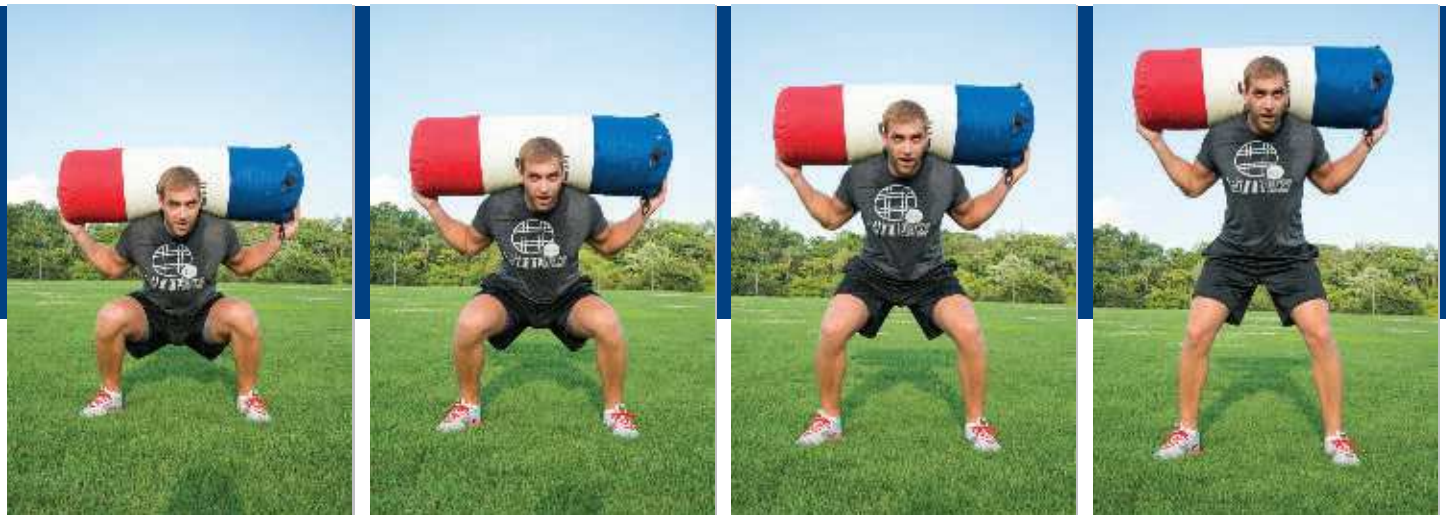
— Tom Whelley, patient

Dr. Wolff is contributing to research that seeks to identify what causes these problems. "Genetics play a role, and so do the sports you play between ages 12 and 17 when growth plates are closing and bone structure forms.

So you're born with a risk factor, and then certain activities can increase the chance of damage."

Andrew Wolff, M.D., and assistant, Alex Napoli, performing a hip ultrasound.

help locate the source of the pain. At my first appointment he developed a plan of injections, anti-inflammatory medications and physical therapy. When surgery did become necessary, I felt comfortable knowing we had exhausted other options and found the pain's source. My hip bone was a little too big for the socket and had been grinding against the labrum for many years. My labrum wasn't just torn, it was shredded.



Tom Whelley, patient, lifting a 100-pound weight after successful hip preservation surgery.

"My hip and back pain was huge…endless…blinding. I had to sleep on the floor and work standing up. I couldn't sit in a car for more than 20 minutes and then climbing out took so long, I had to get to work early. The way I put on shoes and socks—well let's just call it innovative. At 26, after years of competitive sports, weightlifting and running, I thought I might be in debilitating pain forever.

Surgeons couldn't tell exactly where the pain was coming from, but they all wanted to operate immediately and 'see what happens.' That was unacceptable to me. I finally found Dr. Wolff, and he wanted to explore nonsurgical options first to

I woke up from the surgery pain-free and was home using an exercise bike that same night. The whole staff at Sibley was great, from check-in to recovery.

Four months later I was back to weight training and running. I'm in better shape now than ever. Plus, just being able to sleep in a bed, sit on a couch, get out of a car or even sneeze without excruciating pain are things I'll never take for granted again. Everyone told me Dr. Wolff was the best and they were right. He hit it out of the park!"

To learn more
www.Sibley.org/orthopedics