

Femoroacetabular Impingement

The hip joint is a ball and socket joint, which is made up of the leg bone (femur) and the hip bone. A femoroacetabular impingement (FAI) occurs when there is variation in the shape of the ball (femoral head) and the socket (acetabulum), so they don't fit perfectly together. This can cause irritation or damage to the cartilage around the ball and socket. FAI occur in approximately 20% of the population, however only about 1 in 5 patients are symptomatic.

There are three forms of FAI – Cam, Pincer and Mixed impingements. The Cam impingement occurs when the femoral head is not perfectly round, resulting in the ball jamming in the socket when the hip is bent. It is the most common type of FAI, making up 78% of all impingements. Activities that may aggravate Cam impingements include cycling and bending over to put on shoes. The Pincer impingement occurs when the acetabulum sticks out too far, resulting in a pinch between the rim of the socket and the cartilage surrounding the ball. Often the impingements can co-exist, which is known as a Mixed impingement.

The main symptoms of FAI include stiffness and pain in the groin and decreased range of motion of the hip.

Treatment initially involves conservative management, such as physiotherapy, stretches and strengthening exercises. If this type of treatment is not successful in managing symptoms after a couple of months, a surgical opinion may be warranted.

