

HIP OP GIVES CHRIS A SPORTING CHANGE

BEING told at 36 that the main option left open to you is "live with the pain and adjust your lifestyle" is not exactly the words that a keen amateur sportsman wants to hear.

Having struggled on with increasing back and groin pain, Hartlepool man Chris Grieveson was devastated to discover that he was suffering from osteo-arthritis.

It's not good news for anyone, least of all for someone in their 30s whose spare time was eaten up playing badminton, football and golf.

But a chance snippet he picked up on a television programme has led to Chris undergoing a trailblazing form of surgery with a 99 per cent chance he'll be back in full health in a matter of months.

Chris, of Coatham Drive, first started to suffer two years ago.

"I played a lot of sport - badminton, football and golf," he said.

"Then I started to have lower back and groin pain which just started to get worse."

Cartilage

Chris's GP referred him to a sports injuries clinic where X-rays revealed the cause was not what he was expecting.

"I thought it was going to be a soft tissue injury but was told that what I had was osteo-arthritis and there wasn't much cartilage left in the socket between my right leg and my hip," he said.

Facing up to a future where his sporting career looked over and the prospect of constant pain, Chris admitted he left hospital that day feeling suicidal.

"It got to the stage where I couldn't even kick a football around with my son," he said.

Chris was considered too young for a hip replacement, where the average age of those who undergo this form of surgery is usually around 60.

While flicking through the television channels Chris stumbled across an edition of the BBC's Watchdog programme, which highlighted a new technique being used for osteo-arthritis.

Orthopaedic surgeon Derek McMinn has pioneered the Birmingham Hip Resurfacing technique, which is being used on patients who are younger than the average person needing a hip replacement.

Usually in this form of surgery - the most common in Britain today - a plastic socket is put in the pelvis and a metal bar is put in the remainder of



ON THE ROAD TO RECOVERY: Chris gets back into his stride

'It got to the stage where I couldn't kick a ball around with my son'

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the femur to replace the worn-out joint.

The plastic socket can wear out but because the head of the femur is cut off in the operation, the procedure can only be carried out twice and the danger is the second operation will have an even shorter lifespan.

Mr McMinn's technique doesn't cut off the femoral head but instead puts a new metal surface on it which replaces the worn-out cartilage. A metal cover is put in the socket which allows movement and gets rid of the pain.

Using metal on metal for replacements is not a new technique and they were used in the early 60s until problems with friction meant they

were abandoned.

Instead the sockets were replaced with a plastic joint which had its own problem since they eventually break down.

Mr McMinn realised there was some mileage in exploring new ways of reintroducing metal joints after seeing those removed after 25 years which were still in perfect condition.

His idea was to mix the metallurgy of the metal on the metal joint with a resurfacing technique - creating the method which has now become known as the Birmingham Hip Resurfacing.

The beauty of this technique is that removes less bone so that a conventional hip replacement can be carried



out if necessary at a later date.

It isn't right for everyone as needs good bone quality to support the implant, which is why it is most suited for younger osteo arthritis sufferers who will still have good bone density.

Chris travelled down to Birmingham and saw Mr McMinn and considered a suitable candidate, underwent surgery in April.

Although the technique is available on the NHS, it is more expensive than conventional hip replacement only 34 surgeons have been trained to carry it out.

Chris had his operation carried out privately and says he has a 99 per cent chance of a full recovery.

"Even if I end up having to have conventional hip replacement option ten years down the road, I'll have had an extra ten years being able to play sports," he said.