

# Preserving Hip Joint and Cartilage

## Minimally Invasive Technique May Prevent Need for Total Hip Replacement

**W**hile hip pain and hip surgery are often associated with aging, a disorder called femoroacetabular impingement (FAI) is more likely to affect young, active people. "In the last five years, we've recognized that some people are born with abnormal hip anatomy, which results in increased wear and injury to the hip joint," said Medical College of Wisconsin orthopaedic surgeon Patrick Birmingham, MD. "These hips have either too much or not enough bone between the ball and socket of the hip joint."

People with FAI are more prone to tears in the cartilage surrounding the ball or socket, early hip arthritis and chronic pain. The condition is common in active people and athletes, especially those in sports that involve a lot of hip rotation.

To diagnose FAI, Dr. Birmingham conducts a physical exam, takes a medical history and orders imaging and other tests. "The diagnosis is the most challenging part," he said.

Dr. Birmingham is among a few physicians in south-

east Wisconsin who perform an arthroscopic procedure to treat FAI damage and preserve the hip joint and cartilage. The procedure is often done on an outpatient basis.

"Most of the damaged areas associated with FAI can be repaired or removed through the arthroscope," Dr. Birmingham said. "The goals are to attempt to recreate more normal anatomy, reduce pain, prevent the progression of cartilage damage and early arthritis, delay the need for a joint replacement, and return the patient to his or her previous activity level."

To learn more about diagnosing and treating FAI, call **414-805-3666** or **800-272-3666**. ■



■ **PATRICK BIRMINGHAM, MD**