



## Modern View in the Diagnosis and Treatment of Avascular Necrosis of the Femoral Head

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**Annotation:** Avascular necrosis of the femoral head is a serious disease, the relevance of which has not been lost to this day. With early detection and adequate therapy, the prognosis is favorable, but late diagnosis and lack of treatment lead to rapid destruction of the joint and disability of the patient. The purpose of this study is to provide information on modern diagnostic possibilities and a differentiated approach to the choice of treatment method depending on the stage of osteonecrosis.

**Keywords:** avascular necrosis of the femoral head, osteonecrosis.

**Introduction.** Avascular necrosis is a severe disease characterized by disruption of the physiological regeneration of bone tissue and the death of bone cells in a particular area of bone tissue [1,2,4]. The most common localisation is the femoral head, which usually develops in 35-55 year olds and in 20% of people over 50 years of age [3,5,7]. Several classifications of avascular necrosis of the femoral head are currently in use. These are based on the early stages of the process and the post-impression late stages of the disease. The most commonly used classification is the Association Research Circulation Osseous (ARCO) classification (29).

The diagnosis of avascular necrosis of the femoral head in the early stages has its own difficulties. Some authors indicate early symptoms such as progressive atrophy of the thigh and gluteal muscles on the affected side (18, 22). The earliest symptom is limitation of rotational movements, especially internal rotation (80-85% of cases). This is followed by limitation of abduction and, lastly, reduction of flexion.

### ARCO classification (1991)

Stages of the disease	Morphological changes
0 stage	no lesion focus detected
Stage I	no radiological changes, only MRI examination reveals lesion
Stage II	Initial signs of osteonecrosis without articular surface disruption are detected in femoral head on radiograph, MRI, radionuclide examination
stage III	subchondral fracture without sphericity disruption of the femoral head. The subchondral bone shows a "crescent sign"
Stage IV	impingement (flattening) of the femoral head
stage V	All of the above changes combined with a narrowing of the joint cavity (secondary necrosis).
stage VI	Total degenerative-dystrophic changes in the joint

According to ARCO International, the diagnosis of osteonecrosis is based on instrumental methods such as radiography and MRI [14, 26].

X-rays should be performed in all patients with joint pain to diagnose late-stage osteonecrosis and to detect bone fracture and associated osteoarthritis or osteoarthritis of the joint. In the absence of

radiological changes to the joint, an MRI scan with a magnetic field strength of at least 1.5 Tesla is recommended to detect osteonecrosis at an early stage. It is advisable to have an MRI scan 3 months after the initial treatment to evaluate the efficacy of the treatment and the management of the patient [13, 23]. An angiographic study during radiological examination is recommended to assess the blood flow in the area of osteonecrosis when planning surgical treatment with bone grafts [12,17]. Whole-body bone scintigraphy is recommended for the differential diagnosis of osteonecrosis with cancer [10, 28].

Densitometry is recommended for patients over 50 years of age with secondary or idiopathic osteonecrosis. Systemic bone mineral density loss was observed in 60% of patients with traumatic osteonecrosis, 33% of patients treated with glucocorticoids, 27% of patients with idiopathic osteonecrosis, 11% of patients with alcohol abuse and 10% of patients treated with chemotherapy [6,8,9]. Depending on the stage of the disease, conservative or surgical treatment of avascular necrosis of the femoral head is prescribed. Conservative treatment includes unloading of the adjacent joint in combination with the administration of NSAIDs, orthotropic therapy, vascular therapy, intra-articular injections and physiotherapy. Walking on crutches with joint unloading for at least three months is recommended. Joint unloading in the early stages of osteonecrosis is necessary to reduce the risk of impingement of the articular surface because walking then increases the load by a factor of 3.5, which can be critical for the patient in the acute phase of osteonecrosis in the presence of micro fractures in the subchondral area. Unloading for less than three months is insufficient, as the remodelling cycle of a particular bone area, even under favorable conditions, is 3 months [21].

The aim of drug therapy in the early stages of osteonecrosis is to reduce the intensity of bone resorption of the femoral head and stimulate osteoregeneration, which leads to an increase in bone mass, improving bone quality, increasing bone strength and preventing impingement deformity [7,8].

As basic therapy in osteonecrosis, the daily administration of calcium-containing preparations (500-1000 mg/day) in combination with colecalciferol is recommended from the first days after the disease and independent of its localisation [10, 11, 19]. Active metabolites of vitamin D3 and calcium preparations influence the proliferation of osteoblast precursors, activate bone formation processes and improve mineralisation of newly formed bone tissue. Improved intestinal calcium absorption contributes to an increase in skeletal mass and increases the mineral composition of bone, including its cortical component, which determines the strength properties of the femoral head [7, 9, and 20]. Among the etiological factors of osteonecrosis a role is played by pathology of the blood coagulation system, the use of anticoagulants in the treatment of the disease is suggested. Desaggregants are prescribed to improve microcirculation in the affected area. Depending on the stage of the disease, conservative or surgical treatment of avascular necrosis of the femoral head is prescribed. Conservative treatment includes unloading of the adjacent joint in combination with the administration of NSAIDs, osteotropic therapy, vascular therapy, intra-articular injections and physiotherapy. Walking on crutches with joint unloading for at least three months is recommended. Joint unloading in the early stages of osteonecrosis is necessary to reduce the risk of impingement of the articular surface because walking then increases the load by a factor of 3.5, which can be critical for the patient in the acute phase of osteonecrosis in the presence of microfractures in the subchondral area. Unloading for less than three months is insufficient, as the remodelling cycle of a particular bone area, even under favourable conditions, is 3 months [21].

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the etiological factors of osteonecrosis a role is played by pathology of the blood coagulation system, the use of anticoagulants in the treatment of the disease is suggested. Desaggregants are prescribed to improve microcirculation in the affected area

**Conclusion.** Early diagnosis of osteonecrosis determines treatment tactics and prognosis. Small lesions (less than 15% of the femoral head) can be completely repaired with treatment. Lesions of more than 50% of the femoral head, with a high likelihood of progression to collapse, eventually require total joint endoprosthesis. However, in most cases the progression of the disease cannot be prevented, as the patient's lack of orthopaedic compliance, comorbidities and chronic diseases have a particular influence.

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