

21 yrs on, surgery cures short-leg syndrome

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For 21 years, Ritu Paul, lived with a shorter right leg than the left. In December, the 36-year-old Punjab teacher underwent a corrective surgery in the city to restore parity in the length of her legs.

The right leg was a good six inches shorter than the left leg. The cause of the problem was found to be an infection in the hip bone which she contracted when she was just 11.

"A mysterious bacteria was eating into the right hip. One day, I woke up with a shooting pain," recalls Ritu.

"When doctors detected the infection, they began aspirating pus and this went on for some months. But the infection spread. After class five I could not attend school. I was bedridden for five years."

The hip bone deteriorated and it eventually fused with the pelvic bone. "As the hip bone fuses with the pelvis it moves up from the ground towards the body. The pelvis tilted towards the left of the body laterally, resulting in the right foot becoming literally air-borne," explained Dr Niraj Vora, orthopaedic surgeon at SL Raheja Fortis Hospital, Mahim, who conducted the correctional surgery.

The fused hip had become so stiff that she could barely walk without experiencing severe pain.

"I gathered the willpower and moved about with the help of a six-inch heeled wedge sandal, to compensate for the height difference and balance my posture," she said.

Several doctors and even orthopaedic surgeons she visited across Punjab said she would have to live with this condition. "It was something that they had never encountered," said Ritu.

"As this started affecting the nerve endings I would screech in pain. Still I continued to teach in school, got married and even had

Ritu Paul (36) suffered from hip infection since she was eleven years old. Her the ball and socket joint of at hip wore off. Doctors were baffled was her condition and refused to operate.



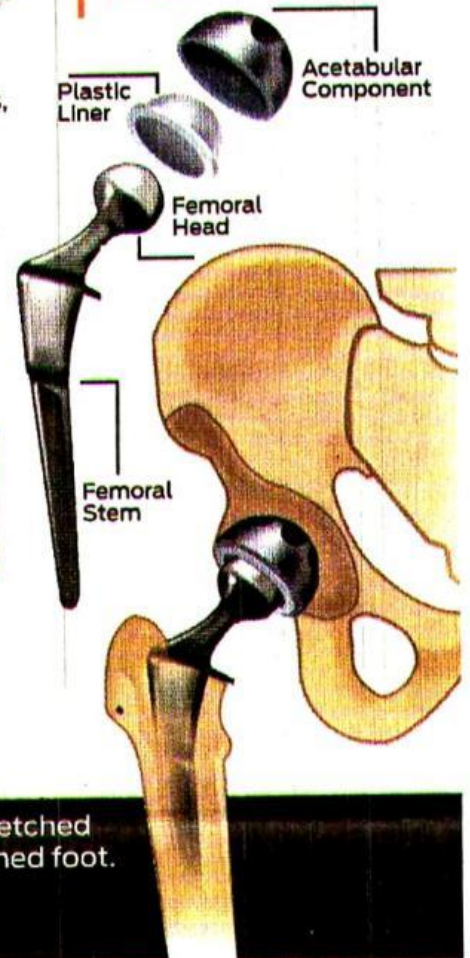
HIP HIP HURRAY



Her pelvis bone shifted to the left side so that her right foot could make movement. Left lateral pelvic tilt is when the right side of the pelvis is elevated higher than the left side.

After 21 years, she underwent a surgery to saw off her fused hip. A ceramic ball and socket joint were later placed.

Her right foot became shorter by six inches



Her muscles and ligaments had to be stretched to retain the normal length of the shortened foot. Eventually normal length of her shorter foot was restored.

a baby. The pain kept increasing," she recounted.

Unlike in the case of a hip replacement surgery where the cartilage has just about worn off and bone diffusion is in the initial stages, Ritu suffered heavy bony fusion.

"The fused bony part had to be

sawed off carefully. A ceramic ball and socket joint was put in place. The muscles and ligaments had to be stretched to restore the normal length of the foot," Dr Vora said.

After dragging her feet in compensation sandals for over a decade, today the young teacher

is in a position to fulfill her fetish for footwear.

"For all these years I was mocked about my uneven feet. The trauma was intense. Now the pain is gone and I can live a normal life. I have bought more than 60 pairs of footwear," a cheerful Ritu said.