Acute Hip Pain–Suspected Fracture

Hip fractures after a fall or minor trauma are a common problem, especially among older patients. Imaging tests are needed to accurately diagnose hip fractures and decide on the best treatment option. Recommended imaging tests for high-velocity trauma differ from falls and minor trauma and are not part of this appropriateness criteria summary; they are covered under different appropriateness criteria.

Radiography, or x-ray (https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/bonerad) , of the hip and pelvis is the most appropriate first imaging test following fall or minor trauma and can be used to identify most hip fractures. When a hip fracture is not seen on x-ray but is suspected clinically, MRI (https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/muscmr) of the pelvis and hips without intravenous (IV) contrast is the next best imaging test. Subtle findings of hip fractures that are not seen on x-ray and soft tissue injuries may be seen on MRI.

CT (https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/abdominct) of the pelvis and hips without IV contrast is also generally appropriate as a second imaging test for suspected hip fracture not seen on x-ray. Though not as sensitive to subtle findings, CT is faster than MRI and is often used for people who have difficulties with the MRI procedure.

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