9 Instability

Contents

Problems and questions:

- How much movement is the femoral head allowed within the joint when the femur is put under pressure?
- When does the degree of movement exceed the line of tolerance and become harmful to the hip joint?
- How can "instability" which is insignificant and usually disappears without any adverse affect on the hip joint, as for instance with a loose joint capsule, be differentiated from those types which are absolutely pathological and need to be treated immediately?

In principle it is necessary to differentiate between normal physiological movement (elasticity) and true pathological instability (Fig. 9.1.b).

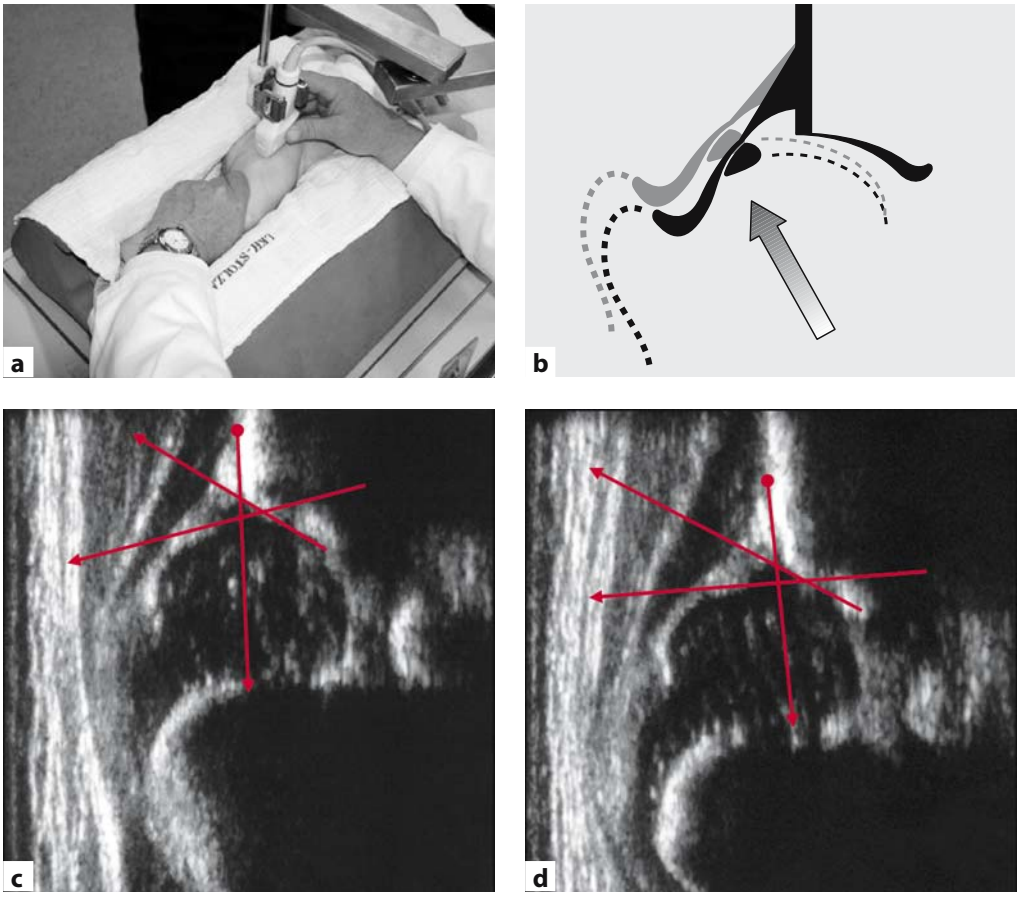

Fig. 9.1. **a** Clinical example of the stress test. The left hand pushes or pulls the leg, while the right hand guides the transducer. **b** Example of elastic whipping. Even when the hip has good bony coverage, the joint capsule can be deformed under pressure from the femoral head with resultant deformation of the cartilaginous roof. **c** Hip without stress applied. Note the position of the labrum in comparison to **d**. **d** The same hip joint as in **c** with stress applied. The bony coverage is identical, the labrum is pressed upwards, consequently increasing the beta value