

Hip Strain

The large bones making up the hip joint serve as anchors for many of the muscles in the area. Some of the muscles move down the thigh and into the knee. Other muscles move across the abdomen or the buttocks. When they are overused or an injury stretches or tears the fibers, the injury is referred to as a strain.

Hip strains usually involve a tear to the muscle or tendon. However, a hip sprain involves a tear to the ligament. There are plenty of ligaments around the hip, but usually a hip strain occurs to the muscle at the front of the hip known as the psoas.

Muscle strains commonly occur in the hip area when the stretched muscle is forced to contract suddenly. Direct blows or falls to the muscle, overuse and overstretching can tear the fibers and result in a strain. The risk of strain increases if you have had a previous injury to the area, if you attempt to embark upon too much too quickly or if you don't warm up before exercising. Strains can be moderate, mild or severe, depending upon how severe the injury is.

Hip Strain Anatomy

The hip is a ball and socket joint connecting the thigh bone (femur) to the pelvis socket. It allows the leg to move. The main muscles in the hip are the hip flexors (psoas, sometimes called psoas major or iliopsoas, and a little bit of the quadriceps) and hip extensors (buttock muscles, and a little bit of the hamstrings). The hip flexors move your knee towards your chest, while the hip extensors move your leg behind you. Both are very important for running, walking, jumping and movement in general. Most strains around the hip occur on the hip flexor (to the psoas), but it is also possible to strain other muscles around the hip. These strains can be known as a groin strain, gluteal strain, hamstring strain etc.

Strains are usually graded I, II and III. Grade I strains are quite mild and can recover in 2-4 weeks, grade II and III are more severe, and can take several weeks to heal.

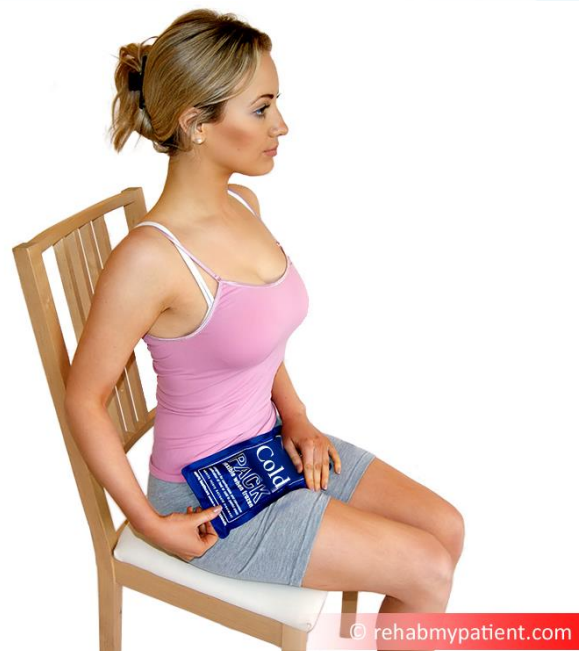
How to Treat a Hip Strain:

1. Rest and Recover

Avoid placing a lot of weight on the hip. It might be necessary to use crutches for the first couple days after the injury depending on how bad the strain is. Avoid participating in the activity that caused the strain for the first 10-14 days. During this time, you can work on building your endurance and strength and your therapist will advise which exercises to do.

2. Ice

Apply ice to the affected area for 5-10 minutes at a time three to five times per day. Try gently massaging the area with ice to help minimize swelling and inflammation.



3. Compression

Wearing a wrap bandage or compression shorts can help to minimize swelling in the affected area.

4. Heat

After the first few days, you might need to incorporate heat therapy into the equation to get the blood moving through the affected area and promote the healing process.

5. Therapy

Start seeing your therapist straight away. They will be able to treat the area, to reduce pain and swelling, and then to help rehabilitate the hip with treatment, electrotherapy, acupuncture or exercises.

Tips:

- Before stretching, warm your muscles up. In doing so, it will help you to stretch more effectively. This can be done by gently jogging or cycling, or going for a brisk walk.
- Make sure to use or wear proper protective gear when participating in sporting activities.
- Participating in a conditioning program will help improve flexibility and muscle fitness.
- Avoid doing rapid stretches. Take the time to do them the right way to reduce your risk of injury. Don't stretch right before you exercise, stretch at least one hour before, or even the night before.
- Depending on the severity of the strain, you might notice swelling in the affected area.