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Exercises for the painful hip

Pain in the hip is a problem that commonly comes from overuse of the joint, especially in athletes who run on banked tracks, ballet dancers, and gymnasts. Pain due to overuse of the hip muscles can be felt as far down as the ankles and as far up as the groin and buttocks. Runners and other athletes who have one leg longer than the other are especially prone to muscle strains in the hip. So are individuals who do a good deal of hill and stair climbing or downhill running.

Your doctor will explain how to treat the pain in your hip with rest and anti-inflammatory agents. You will find that exercises are especially helpful, since they can improve the range of motion and strengthen muscles in the hips. Your doctor may also recommend a special pad for your running shoes to compensate for the extension of your hips while you are engaging in your physical activity.

Stretching exercises

● *Iliotibial tract stretch* Stand with your left foot slightly forward, and put most of your weight on that leg. Tilt your pelvis down on the right side. This will stretch the muscles on the left.

Tip: If you place your hands on the crest of your hips as shown it will help you feel the sensation when you are in the correct position (see illustration 1). Repeat the stretch for the other hip.

● *Leaning stretch* Stand with your side to a wall, just far enough away from it that you can lean against it and support your weight with your outstretched hand (see illustration 2). Cross the foot closer to the wall over your other foot. Let your pelvis sag toward the wall as shown. Hold for 15 seconds and straighten slowly. Repeat five times, then switch sides.

● *Straddle stretch* Stand with legs straddled and the left knee bent slightly (see illustration 3). Lean your weight into the leg while keeping the



Exercises for the painful hip continued



pelvis straight. Straighten slowly, and repeat five times. Switch sides and repeat.

● **Gluteus medius stretch** Sitting on the floor, cross your left leg over your right and bring your right arm through as shown (see illustration 4). Push your leg to the right with your arm. At the same time twist your upper body to the left, and turn your head to the rear. Hold the stretch for 10 seconds. Release and repeat five times.

● **Hip adductors stretch** Sit on the floor or on a soft mat. Put the soles of your feet together, pull the heels toward the groin, and lean your body forward (see illustration 5). Hold for 30-60 seconds, release, and repeat five times.

● **Gastrocnemius stretch** Stand facing a wall from far enough away that you can step forward with one foot and then lean against the wall (see illustration 6). Keep your back foot flat and your head up. Slowly bend your arms and drop your pelvis toward the wall, keeping the pelvis even as shown. Hold for 10 seconds, then straighten slowly. Repeat five times for each side.

● **Hip extensor or gluteal stretch** Lying flat on a table or bed with your knees hanging over the edge, grasp one knee and pull it to your chest. Keep the other leg flat on the table and try to bend that knee. Hold for five seconds and straighten. Repeat five times for each side.

Remember that the stretch position should feel tight, but never painful. Stretch before and after your sport or activity. If you have time for only one, stretching *before* is more important. □

Additional instructions: _____
