

What is Causing Your Hip Pain? Muscle Strain or Tear? How to Tell

A hip muscle strain occurs when one of the muscles supporting the hip becomes stretched beyond its limit. This excessive stretching may cause a “muscle strain”, a “muscle tear”, or a “muscle pull”. All three descriptions refer to damage to a muscle or its attaching tendon.

The injury to the hip muscle or muscle tendon may be graded according to the severity:

1st degree - the hip muscle may be sore but there was only mild over-stretching of a muscle.

2nd degree - mild swelling and bruising but possible severe muscle pain and tenderness. Moderate over-stretching of a hip muscle with some tearing of the fibers.

3rd degree - severe pain and swelling. Muscle or tendon is torn all the way through. Muscle is either ripped into two separate pieces or sheared away from tendon. This can cause a complete loss of function and may require surgery.

Anyone can strain their hip muscles from just daily tasks, but more often they occur during a sports event. A hip strain can occur suddenly during a sports event, or with sudden lifting. The strain can also occur gradually over time due to a repetitive motion (such as stair climbing or hiking).

You have a higher chance of experiencing a hip strain if:

- A. You have had a prior hip strain or tear.
- B. You have muscle tightness.
- C. You fail to warm up before an athletic or work event.
- D. You attempt to do too much too soon with exercise or work.

Signs and Symptoms of a Hip Muscle Strain or Tear

- 1. Swelling and bruising (discoloration)
- 2. Muscle spasms
- 3. Previous hip strain or tear
- 4. You can feel point tenderness.
- 5. Might feel an indentation or bump in the muscle.
- 6. Pain when that muscle is used.
- 7. Weakness when that muscle is used.
- 8. Hearing a “pop” sound when the muscle or tendon was injured.

X-rays may be ordered to make certain a bone fracture did not occur with a strain or tear.

Do You Have a Muscle Strain or Tear? Five Self-Tests You Can Perform.

These tests are not to be used to help you self-diagnose or assess yourself. We highly recommend you see your physician for a professional diagnosis.

1. Test your hip flexors. Sit in a chair. Raise your right knee (like marching) and hold it up. Push down on your thigh and try to continue to hold the right knee in the air. Pain and/or weakness may be noted with a strain or tear. Compare to the left side.



2. Test your hip abductors. Sit in a chair. Spread both knees apart. Using both hands attempt to push both knees together while resisting with the muscles of your leg. Pain and/or weakness may be noted on the leg with a hip strain or tear.



3. Test your hip adductors. Sit in a chair. Squeeze both knees together. Attempt to pull your knees apart while resisting with the hip and thigh muscles. Pain and/or weakness may be noted on the leg with a hip strain or tear.



4. Test your hip extensors. Sit in a chair. Clasp your hands under your right thigh near your knee joint. Attempt to pull the knee up while resisting with the muscles of your leg. Pain and/or weakness may be noted with a strain or tear. Compare to the left side.



5. Use your fingers to feel for point tenderness in the muscles surrounding your hips and in your thigh muscles.

