

Groin Pain

Information and Exercise Leaflet for Patient's and Carers

Groin problems are normally caused by injury or general wear and tear and usually settle within the first 6 weeks. As you get older normal wear and tear can cause your groin to flare up from time to time, often for no reason (see Osteoarthritis (OA) of the Hip advice leaflet).

What is a groin strain?

- A groin strain is a tear in one of the muscles in the pelvis, including your lower abdominal or thigh muscles.
- It normally affects the area where the muscle and tendon meet.
- It can become a longstanding problem if the muscles around the groin weaken.

Symptoms

- The main symptom of a groin strain is a sudden, sharp pain in the inner thigh/groin muscle. This then becomes a dull ache.
- You may also have some bruising and swelling and the area will feel tender.
- Sometimes the initial injury subsides and you can develop groin pain further down the line due to weaknesses in the surrounding muscles.
- When the abdominals are involved the pain can be made worse with coughing and sneezing.

Causes

- A groin strain is most often caused by a side-stepping or twisting movement and occasionally by overstretching the muscles during sport.
- It's common in sports such as rugby or football where you need to make sudden changes in direction and side-step quickly.
- It may also be caused by a poor running technique.

Should I be resting or moving?

Recent Injury

For the first 24 to 48 hours

- Try to rest your hip but avoid long spells of not moving at all.
- Try to move your hip gently for 10 to 20 seconds every hour when you are awake.

After 48 hours

- You should try to use your leg more.
- Do whatever you normally would and stay at or return to work. This is important and is the best way to get better.
- Avoid sports or heavy lifting until you have less discomfort and good movement.
- When going upstairs reduce the strain on your groin by leading with your good leg. If there is a handrail, use it.

Longstanding Groin Pain

This is groin pain that has been present for more than 2 months

- Follow the simple advice in this leaflet. If this fails to improve your symptoms you may need referring to physiotherapy for a detailed assessment and appropriate management.
- Avoid all sports and activities that aggravate the groin. It is important to note that the aggravation may only be felt after activity and not during.

Should I take painkillers?

- Painkillers can help you keep moving. However, it is important to discuss this with your GP, especially if you are taking any other medication

Should I use ice or a heat pad?

If you have had an injury or a flare-up of an old problem in the last two days, wrap crushed ice in a damp towel and hold it for five to ten minutes against the part of your leg that hurts. You can do this every two to three hours. Make sure you use a damp towel between the ice and the skin to avoid ice burn.

Alternatively, you could try sports sprays and gel packs, which do a similar job.

After two days, you may find that heat is more relaxing. You could use a heat pad or a hot water bottle with an insulated cover on it. Make sure this is not too hot and not directly touching your skin. You should apply this for 10 to 15 minutes, three to four times a day. You can also continue with ice to help reduce the pain and further swelling.

What about work?

You will recover faster and everybody will benefit if you can stay at or get back to work as early as possible. Do not worry if your groin still hurts, as you may only have to do light work at first. Try to stay active and remember to keep moving. Speak to your manager about any concerns you may have.

What about sports?

You should take time before you take part in any sports after a groin problem. If you take part in sports too soon you could be injured again. You should have no swelling and be able to move your hip properly. You should have full or close to full strength and be able to take your weight through your leg without limping. Remember to stretch and warm up fully before sports.

Warning Signs

The following symptoms are very rare, but if you suddenly develop any of them, you should consult your doctor straightaway.

- Back pain, referred leg pain with or without pins & needles, hot or burning pain. (Attend GP/ Spinal drop in clinic)
- Significant swelling to the leg not just the hip
- Feeling generally unwell such as signs of infection i.e. night sweats that are out of the ordinary, high temperature and feeling unwell
- Difficulty passing or controlling urine
- Numbness, pins and needles, or weakness in both legs
- Numbness around your back passage or genitals
- Unsteadiness on your feet
- Testicular pain or swelling
- Constant night pain (unable to rest/sleep)
- Unexplained weight loss
- Unable to put any weight through your leg
- A lump in your groin region
- Pain that gets worse and worse
- Under the age of 16 you should consult your doctor



Personal Exercise Program



Lying on your back.

Bend and straighten your leg.

Repeat 10-20 times.

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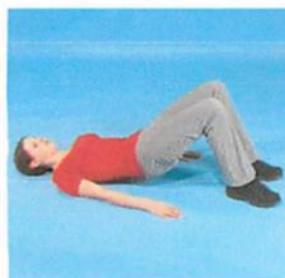


Lying on your back.

Bend the leg to be stretched towards your chest and hold onto the knee with both arms. Pull your knee towards your chin keeping your head on the floor. You should feel the stretching on the back of your thighs and buttock. Hold approx. 20 sec. - relax.

Repeat 3 times.

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Lying on your back with knees bent.

Squeeze your buttocks together and lift your bottom off the floor. Return to starting position.

Repeat 10-20 times.

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Lying on your back.

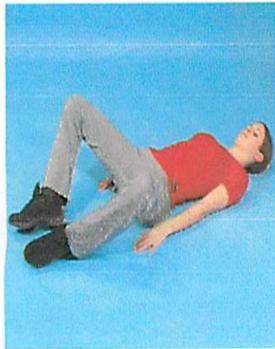
Bring your leg out to the side and then back to mid position.

Repeat 10-20 times.

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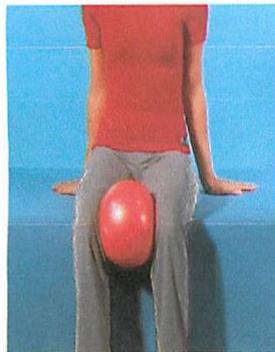


Lying with your knees bent and feet on the floor hip width apart.

Turn the soles of your feet to face each other and allow your knees to fall outwards. Feel the stretch in your groin. Keep your back flat on the floor during the exercise.

Repeat 10-20 times.

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Sit. Place a ball between your knees.

Squeeze the ball.

Hold 5 seconds.

Repeat 10-20 times.

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If your symptoms fail to improve within 6 weeks with this regime you should contact physiotherapy for a physical assessment.

If this is the case remember to bring a pair of shorts to change in to, this will help the physiotherapist diagnose your problem.

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