

My Hip Hurts Getting Out of a Chair

Understanding Start-Up Hip Pain

Why Is Getting Out of a Chair So Painful?

The transition from sitting to standing is one of the most mechanically demanding tasks the hip performs. It requires the hip to move from a deeply flexed, compressed position — where joint pressure can be quite high — to a fully extended, weight-bearing position, all while generating significant force through weakened or arthritic structures. The first few steps are often the worst, then the hip "warms up" as circulation increases and joint fluid redistributes.

This pattern of being worst at start-up and improving with movement is one of the most recognizable features of hip osteoarthritis — but it can also come from other causes.

What Is Most Likely Causing This?

Hip osteoarthritis (most common):

- Stiffness after sustained positions is a hallmark symptom of OA
- Pain typically in the groin or inner thigh
- Improves within a few minutes of walking — the "warming up" effect

Hip flexor tightness or tendinopathy:

- Prolonged sitting shortens the hip flexors; rising stretches and loads them suddenly
- Felt as a pull or ache at the front of the hip when first standing

Hip labral tear or impingement:

- The hip end-range positions during sitting and standing can pinch the labrum
- Described as a catching or sharp sensation in the groin on rising

Sacroiliac joint dysfunction:

- Pain at the base of the spine and buttock on first rising, often one-sided

What Does It Feel Like?

- A sharp or aching pain when beginning to stand from a chair, car, or toilet
- Stiffness and difficulty straightening up fully for the first few steps

- Pain that eases after walking for a minute or two
- The need to hold onto something to rise safely
- Worsening with longer periods of sitting (car rides, theater, desk work)

Practical Tips While You Are in PT

- Sit in a chair with a higher seat — reduces hip flexion angle and makes rising easier
- Before standing, rock forward and shift your weight to the front of the seat
- Avoid low, soft couches and chairs
- Use armrests to assist rising without overloading the hip

When Should I Be Concerned?

- Pain that never improves with movement — even after 10+ minutes of walking
- Pain following a fall from a chair — possible fracture
- Significant rapid worsening over days

The Good News

Start-up hip pain responds very well to physical therapy. Strengthening the hip and core muscles, improving joint mobility, and learning optimal movement strategies for rising dramatically reduce this symptom. Many patients are surprised how quickly this specific complaint resolves with the right program.

Start-up hip pain is one of the symptoms that most **quickly resolves** with a targeted physical therapy program.

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