

Hip Flexor Strain

What You Need to Know

What Is a Hip Flexor Strain?

The hip flexors are a group of muscles at the front of the hip — most notably the iliopsoas (iliacus and psoas major) and the rectus femoris (the front portion of the quadriceps) — that work to bring the knee toward the chest and bend at the hip. A strain occurs when one or more of these muscles is overstretched or partially torn, causing pain at the front of the hip or groin.

Hip flexor strains are common in sprinters, soccer players, martial artists, and anyone who performs explosive kicking or accelerating movements. They also frequently develop in people who sit for long periods and have chronically shortened, weakened hip flexors that are then asked to perform sudden demands.

What Does It Feel Like?

- A sharp or pulling pain at the front of the hip or groin at the time of injury
- Aching and tenderness in the front of the hip that persists
- Pain when lifting the knee — walking up stairs, running, or getting out of a car
- Tightness or cramping in the front of the hip or inner thigh
- Pain that increases when the hip is extended (walking briskly, lunging, or stretching the front of the hip)
- A snapping sensation may accompany the pain (snapping hip syndrome)

What Makes It Worse?

- Running, sprinting, or kicking
- Climbing stairs or steep inclines
- Stretching the front of the hip (hip flexor stretch) in acute stages
- Rising from a seated position after prolonged sitting

Grades of Strain

- Grade I — mild, microscopic tearing; minimal functional loss; returns to sport in 1–2 weeks
- Grade II — partial tear; significant pain and some weakness; 3–6 weeks recovery
- Grade III — complete rupture; severe pain, weakness, and bruising; may require surgical consultation

When Should I Be Concerned?

- Significant bruising spreading down the thigh — possible complete tear
- Complete inability to lift the leg
- A palpable gap or divot in the muscle
- No improvement after 2–3 weeks of conservative care

The Good News

Most hip flexor strains heal well with physical therapy. The key is progressing from rest and protection, through gentle stretching and strengthening, to sport-specific loading at the right pace. Returning too soon or too aggressively is the most common reason for re-injury.

Most hip flexor strains recover fully within **2 to 6 weeks** depending on the severity, with proper physical therapy guidance.

This information is for general educational purposes only and is not a substitute for a professional evaluation. Call us today — we have immediate openings with no waitlist.

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