

Oh My Aching Hip!

Most of us know someone who has had a hip replacement. For those of you that are trying to make your hips last a lifetime, you'll succeed by watching for the early warning signs and taking care of your bodies with exercise and stretching.

Hip problems commonly stem from the muscles, joints and/or bursae that surround the hip. The psoas (hip flexor) and piriformis (back of hip) muscles are frequently strained or tight. When these muscles are tight they limit the motion of the hip and cause the joint to pinch and wear down faster, causing pain and arthritis. Since it takes decades for arthritis to get bad enough to cause pain, the muscles act as early warning signs.

Fixations and pinching of the hip joint are created through poor posture, lack of exercise and injuries. Restoring normal joint motion is critical to reduce pain and preventing arthritis. To fully address hip problems, I always look at the function of the foot, ankle, knee and lower back as fixations and abnormal findings in these areas will put additional stress on the hip. Often the hip feels the pain and injury as it compensates for one or more of these other joints not working properly.

Most hip conditions can be treated without drugs and surgery. Even some severe cases of arthritis can be controlled through conservative treatment. In addition to bodywork, I recommend muscle stretching and strengthening. For recent injuries use 15 to 30 minutes of ice over the painful area once per hour. For chronic hip problems try heat for 20-30 minutes at a time.

Stretching the psoas, gluteal, piriformis, quadriceps (front of thigh) and hamstrings (back of thigh) muscles frequently help reduce pain and aid in prevention of hip problems. Massage is a great way to balance muscles, stimulate healing and release tension. Muscle spasm can also be helped by sitting on a tennis ball placed under the painful muscle for up to two minutes at a time.

Hands on treatment for preventing and treating hip problems are simple and very effective. As always, you'll get the most out of care after you have the problem identified by a qualified professional. Additionally, if any of these treatments produce severe pain during or increased pain after the treatment, it's not right for you.

Yours in health,

Dr. Rick

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