

Hip Strains

A tear in the muscle fibers caused by either a fall or direct blow to the muscle, overstretching and overuse injury is called a strain. Muscle strains often occur in the hip region whenever a muscle contracts all of a sudden from its stretched position. It can be mild, moderate or severe and depends on the level of injury. The chances of having a hip muscle strain becomes high if you have had a previous injury in the area or if there is no warm-up before exercising. The most common symptom of hip strain is pain and swelling in the area of injury. Pain may worsen on using the injured muscle and also the strength in the muscle may also decrease.

Apart from physical examination of your hip and leg, your doctor may order an X-ray to rule out a stress fracture of the hip and confirm the diagnosis. Initial treatment aims at relieving pain and swelling. RICE protocol should be followed for mild to moderate strains. It includes:

- **R-Rest:** Avoid bearing excess weight on your hip. You should use crutches for the first 1-2 days after injury.
- **Ice:** Gently rub the area with ice. This decreases the swelling.
- **C-Compression:** Wrap a bandage over the area to help decrease the swelling.
- **E-Elevation:** Elevate the injured area above heart level.

Anti-inflammatory medications may also be prescribed to reduce swelling and pain. In the initial two days, your doctor may recommend application of heat to the area using hot soaks or heating pads. It is beneficial to be away from activities that causes the strain for 2 weeks. During this period, simple stretching and strengthening exercises can be done to regain muscle strength.

Preventing hip strains

You can practice certain techniques to avoid straining the muscles around your hip. Stretching your muscles before starting any exercise or sport activity significantly reduces your risk. Also, remember to stretch the muscles slowly and hold the stretch for some time instead of making large number of rapid stretches. Warm up every time before you stretch. Participate in conditioning program to keep your muscles flexible and fit always. Use protective gear that is appropriate for the sports activity you are involved.