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Shortened Hip Flexors?

PT Corner

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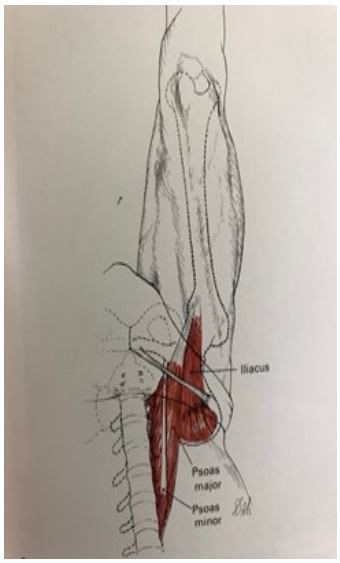

That pesky hip flexor causes many of us trouble, especially when it shortens. Our less active life style may be the culprit. Instead of walking 10 miles or more a day as many people used to do just to survive, many of us now walk no more than 100 yards due to our modern technology and transportation. We just sit. And this chronic sitting shortens the hip flexors making it more difficult to stand erect without excessive lordosis or excessive inward curvature of the spine.

Shortening of the hip flexors leads to muscle imbalance and weakness. With excessive lordosis the abdominal muscles become lengthened and weaker and the lumbar extensor muscles become shortened causing more compression of the lumbar spine.

The most prominent of the hip flexors is the psoas along the with the iliacus, which lie deep within the abdominal cavity. The psoas originates from the bodies of the lumbar spine and inserts into the lesser trochanter of the hip. A lesser hip flexor is the rectus femoris, one of the 4 heads of the quadriceps, which attaches above the hip into the pelvis at the AIIS. Shortening of this muscle leads to anterior pelvic tilt.

Your hip flexors either flex your hip forward towards you trunk, as in walking, or flex your trunk forward as in doing sit ups. The truth is you can do a lot of sit-ups and still have weak abdominal muscles, just by using your hip flexors.

With shortened hip flexors the only way to stand more erect (because the hip flexors are pulling the spine forward) is to extend the lumbar spine into more lordosis.

This can ultimately lead to other complications such as spinal stenosis and pain. In order to keep the hip flexors adequately stretched it is important to isolate them by maintaining a posterior pelvic tilt, so as to not increase lumbar extension. This will help to encourage more muscle balance between opposing muscle groups. Deep tissue massage can also effectively lengthen shortened muscles to encourage better balance. Contact one of the therapists or trainers for more information.

TIP FROM A TRAINER *by Julie Fitzpatrick*

Rest Easy

In the workout world there are a few ways to define rest. First, there is rest during exercises—the breaks you take between reps or sets. But there are also other types of rest like days off from exercise, sleep and proper nutrition. Each of these is essential to seeing the results you are after.

You should rest anywhere from 30 sec. to 5 min. between sets. The rule of thumb is to rest for shorter periods of time during endurance training and for longer periods of time during strength training. Without this rest you can compromise good form, which can lead to injury.

The most important rest is actually the rest that happens between workouts. Muscle groups need 48 to 72 hours to recuperate and repair themselves after strength training workouts.

Sleep is the most important piece of the recovery process. Shutting your body down with sleep gives it the opportunity to repair everything from torn muscle tissues to hormone levels.

Give your body the rest it needs and you'll reach your goal—be that to lose weight, gain muscle or get fitter—faster.