

Greater Trochanteric Pain Syndrome (Pain on the outside of the Hip)

Information and Exercise Leaflet for Patient's and Carers

Pain on the outside of the hip is a common source of discomfort and can affect one hip and sometimes both. The pain often comes from irritation of the tendon which attaches your buttock muscle on to the side of the hip. The pain can start without any significant injury and is commonly as a result of an increase in a person's activity levels. It can also occur if you have been significantly less active than what you would normally be.

So why does my hip hurt?

The pain is caused by a combination of two factors;

1. Compression of the soft tissues and tendons of the buttock. – see our compression guide on the next page to reduce this and avoid these positions.
2. Overload, which means putting too much force through these tendons than what they are used to. See the overload guide on page 3 for more information on managing this.



The first step in managing these symptoms is to modify your activities and avoid spending too much time in positions that compress the area. There is a table on the next page to give some advice and tips on how to manage this.

Compression Guide

Aggravating Factor

Solution

Lying on the affected side – This creates direct compression to the soft tissues on the outside of the hip

Where possible try to lie on your back and if this isn't possible put a pillow under your affected hip.

Lying on the opposite side – This causes the top (affected) leg to drop across the line of the body which increases the compression.

Try placing a pillow between your knees to prevent your leg from dropping down and sleep on your back where possible.

Crossing your legs

Avoid crossing your legs.

Standing on one leg (getting dressed).

Try to sit down to put shoes and socks on.

Prolonged Sitting

If you work at a desk, try to stand up every 30 minutes.

Sitting in low seats

Try and sit on a supportive chair. Consider raising the height by sitting on an extra pillow.

'Hip hanging' standing position – Loosely hanging your body weight on one hip increases the pressure on the outside of the hip.

Try and keep equal weight through each hip with your feet a shoulder width apart.

Climbing stairs

Try to lead with the better leg going upstairs. This might mean going one step at a time and try to plan your journeys, so you aren't making unnecessary trips where possible.

Excessive walking

Try to pace your activity levels. It's important to keep active but don't push into pain. Keep walks short and frequent.

Running or exercise

If you are still able to exercise. Try running on a level surface and not up or down hill. Try and reduce high impact activities that require a lot of jumping and landing

What does Overload Mean and why is it Important?

The muscles and tendons in the body get used to your usual activity levels such as work, exercise and other hobbies. They have the strength to cope with this without becoming sore. If your activity level increases e.g., going from a desk-based job to a more active job, starting a new hobby like the couch to 5k or increasing the amount of exercise you do then these muscles and tendons have to work harder and can become painful. This happens because tendons can't adapt quickly enough to the amount of work that they are being asked to do. If you slowly build your activity levels up, this allows the tendons time to get stronger and doesn't result in pain.

This can also happen when we are less active as muscles get weaker which can make returning to your usual activity levels more difficult.

Example

Your usual activity levels include a hill walk twice a week but due to a busy time in your life you haven't been able to do this for a month. When you do have more time to return to your usual walking, your muscles and tendon may have become weaker causing your normally activities to become painful. You may need to build back up to your usual walking by doing one a week or two shorter walks.

How do I know if my activities are causing a painful reaction?

It is common to get a painful reaction if too much load is put through the hip. If this pain is more than 5/10 (with 10 being the worst pain imaginable) or pain lasts for more than 24 hours check what you have been doing and ease back. Once this has settled you can start to gradually introduce your activities and exercises again. If you have a mild aggravation (pain is less than 5/10) and this settles within 24 hours, keep going with your exercises and gradual return to full activities (see below).



How does it improve?

The first step is to reduce the compression and overload which is affecting the hip using the guides above. Once the pain has become manageable the next step is to build strength in the tendon to help it to cope with your day to day activities. There are some exercises on the final page to start this process. It's important not to push through pain with the exercises and follow the same painful reaction rules above. Your physio may then choose to make these exercises more challenging as your symptoms improve.

What about work and hobbies?

We would encourage you to stay active without aggravating your symptoms and work is a part of this. This is different for everybody dependent on the physical demands of each job. We would advise you follow the guidance above on preventing overload but if you have any concerns then discuss this with your manager as there may be ways to modify your duties.

Should I take pain relief?

Pain relief plays an important role in managing your symptoms, allowing you to stay active and start your rehabilitation. Pain relief can also help to prevent developing compensatory movement patterns such as a limp which can lead to pain developing elsewhere. Ice or heat can sometimes be beneficial in reducing the pain but before doing this make sure you have full sensation in the skin on your hip and place a barrier between your skin e.g towel, between your thigh and the heat/ice. Don't use this for longer than 10-15 minutes.

Can anything else contribute?

There are multiple links within health research to show that the factors listed below can increase the risk of developing problems with tendons and can influence your pain levels and recovery. Therefore, it is important that we help you address these areas as part of your treatment. You can discuss some of these factors with your physiotherapist to help us work together on guiding your long-term management and try to prevent problems recurring.

- Obesity
- Anxiety, depression and stress or other mental health conditions.
- Poor sleep patterns
- Smoking
- Lack of exercise
- Increased Alcohol consumption.
- Other linked conditions that aren't controlled e.g. Diabetes

Warning Signs

The following symptoms are very rare, but if you suddenly develop any of them, you should consult your doctor straightaway.

- Back pain, referred leg pain with or without pins & needles, hot or burning pain. Attend GP
- Significant swelling to the leg not just the hip
- Feeling generally unwell such as signs of infection for example night sweats that are out of the ordinary, high temperature and feeling unwell
- Difficulty passing or controlling urine
- Numbness, pins and needles, or weakness in both legs
- Numbness around your back passage or genitals
- Unsteadiness on your feet
- Testicular pain or swelling
- Constant night pain (unable to rest/sleep)
- Unexplained weight loss
- Unable to put any weight through your leg
- A lump in your groin region
- Worsening pain
- Under the age of 16 you should consult your doctor

Exercises

Start these exercises to build strength in the muscles around the hip. Some minor discomfort following the exercises can be normal but there shouldn't be any significant increase in pain. If this is the case, try and reduce the number of repetitions or length of time holding the position. If this still doesn't help, then consult your physiotherapist. It can take some time to see significant improvements in symptoms and the exercises may need to be made more challenging once they become easier.

Exercise 1 - Bridging – Lying on your Back

- Slowly lift your bottom up off the floor, keeping your back straight
- You should feel this working in your buttock muscles
- Slowly lower back to the start position
- If it is painful try reducing how high you lift and simply contract your buttock muscles without lifting. You can also put a pillow under your bottom initially to make this easier.
- **Repeat 5 times**
- **Hold for 10 -15 seconds**
- **If the exercises becomes too easy then you can waist to lift.**



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Exercise 2 - Hip extension

- Lie on your front – Squeeze your buttock muscle lift the injured leg off the bed.
- This should be felt in the buttock
- Aim to hold for 3 x 30 seconds but start With what feels comfortable
- This can also be done in standing with your arms on a worktop lifting the leg backwards pushing your heel against something.
- You can make this harder using an ankle weight or using a resistance band tied around the other leg. Make sure you remove the weight or band before moving out of the exercise position.



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Exercise 3 – leg lift

- The aim is to work the buttock muscles
- Start with pillows in between your legs so the hip is being lifted from a non-painful position.
- Then lift the leg and hold this position.
- Aim to build up to 3 x 30 seconds but start with what feels comfortable.
- This can be made more effective by pushing your heel back into the wall.
- It can be made easier by bending the knee on the top leg



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Exercise 4 – core contraction

- In this position gently roll your hips towards the bed whilst drawing in your lower stomach muscles. Try not to hold your breath and breathe normally.
- Hold this position for 3 x 30 seconds
- The aim of this is to activate your deeper abdominal muscles.



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If your symptoms fail to improve within 6 weeks with this regime you should contact your GP for consideration of a physiotherapy referral.

If this is the case remember to bring a pair of shorts to change in to.

What actions can I take to improve my health?

Evidence tells us that making healthy lifestyle choices can have a big impact on influencing problems with your muscles and bones and can play a major role in your overall health. Some of the most effective areas to address are below: (click on the links)

Maintaining a healthy weight

Link: www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-weight/



Increasing levels of physical activity

Link: www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/



Avoiding poor sleep patterns

Link: www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/how-to-get-to-sleep/



Reducing alcohol consumption

Link: www.nhs.uk/live-well/alcohol-support/calculating-alcohol-units/



Stopping smoking

Link: www.nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking/



Maintaining a healthy mind

Link: www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/



The **good news** is that you are able to influence lots of these by modifying your lifestyle. Therefore it is important that you consider addressing these areas alongside your current treatment.

You may wish to discuss any of these factors with your treating clinician who will be able to work with you and guide your long term management and support you to improve your wellbeing.

There will be information about the local services that exist within the waiting areas of the physiotherapy department and your treating clinician will be able to help signpost you to appropriate services.

The websites listed below give more information on local services available:

- Blackburn and Darwen - <https://refreshbwd.com/>
- East Lancashire - <http://www.upandactive.co.uk/>
- Public Health England <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health- england>



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