

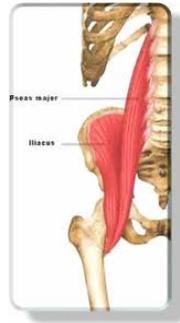
Hip Exercises

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Hip Flexor (psoas) stretch

This muscle becomes tight for many reasons – posture (too much forward pelvic tilt, prolonged sitting); sport - especially where the athlete is regularly bending (hockey, cycling) or using the hip flexors a lot (running, kicking, dance). There are several hip flexor muscles, but the one targeted by this exercise is the *iliopsoas* (right).



Exercise

There are two versions of this stretch described – one with a partner to assist, and one without (self-stretch).

1. Partner assisted stretch

Sit on the end of a firm bench with your bottom just on the edge. Bring one knee up to your chest and grasp it there with two hands. Have your partner assist you as you carefully lie back on the bench, still grasping one knee. Let the other leg hang freely. When you are lying this way, your lower back should be fairly flat against the bench.

Your partner will then gently push down on the knee of the leg being stretched (the one hanging down). If your lower leg is not hanging close to the vertical (the leg is straight out, as in the drawing on the right), they will gently push your foot toward the bench as well. You should feel a mild to moderate stretch in the front of the hip and possibly into the thigh. It is possible you will feel a strong stretch in the back of the other leg (the one you are grasping). If you do, relax the pressure off a little. The stretch should only be in the leg that's hanging down.

Have your partner hold the stretch for 20 seconds. Then, they will keep the pressure on your knee, while you press it up toward the ceiling with moderate force. Hold the contraction for 5 seconds, slowly relax it off, and have your partner repeat the stretch for another 20 seconds. Do this sequence five times, then swap legs.



2. Self-Stretch

You will do this stretch kneeling, so to ensure you don't get a sore knee, place a cushion down first. Do the stretch close to a bench that you can hold onto, so you're not off balance. Place the knee of the leg to be stretched on the cushion. The other leg is bent out in front of this one, hip and knee at 90° with your front foot on the floor.

Gently draw in your stomach muscles, and then 'tuck' your pelvis under (*posterior tilt*). Think of pulling your tail bone forward between your legs. Don't allow your back to bend. This should be enough for you to feel the stretch in the front of the hip or thigh of the kneeling leg. If you can't feel it, try tightening your buttock on the same leg, to get a slight extension through your hip joint. Don't arch your back.

Hold the stretch for 20 seconds, then relax your stomach muscles to let the stretch off. Repeat this sequence 5 times, and swap legs.

This stretch can be difficult to master. Get instructions from your physio if you are having trouble.



If you would like a printable copy of this exercise, please email us at: info@cssphysio.com.au

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