

3 reasons you've got 'tight' hamstrings

Hamstring symptoms, tightness and/or pain are a common occurrence within the active population amounting to a large loss of time from athletic activity. Many of these symptoms seem to reoccur despite good treatment and rehabilitation strategies.

Question is: Why do these symptoms reoccur?

The answer is finding out what is causing the problem in the first place.

By only treating and rehabilitating the presenting symptoms i.e. the hamstring, you are doing nothing to decrease the likelihood of further injury. We know the biggest precursor for injury is previous injury so the likelihood of reoccurring injury is more prevalent, which makes finding and fixing the cause of the symptoms the best way to manage an injury.

Although this article relates to the hamstrings the above is true for any type of problem. Fix the source and not just the site of symptoms.

So in today's post I have listed 3 reasons you may have 'tight' hamstrings.

#1

The hamstrings are doing too much

One reason the hamstrings may present as 'tight' and continually tighten is that they are being overworked. If you have tightened up following a monster hamstring session consisting of 1000 reps of RDLs followed by some high end speed work then you have done too much. That much volume and you are going to break down.

However, I am not referring to excess training volume as a cause of injury but I am referring to muscle overload. I am relating to when the hamstrings have to take up the slack of other muscle groups to perform certain movements.

For example, someone that cannot utilise their gluteal muscles, may really heavy on hamstring muscle force generation to perform movements involving hip extension i.e. squat, lunge, jump, running patterns.

Over a period of time, the hamstrings may reach their limit of tolerance and at that point injury will occur.

#2

The hamstrings are in a bad position

This largely relates to the position the hamstrings sit as a result of pelvic position. We know that a muscle works best in its mid range position i.e. when the muscles are neither too short or too long. If a muscle is too short or indeed too long then it is unlikely to operate optimally.

The position of the pelvis will ultimately set the resting position for the hamstrings due to their attachment site on the pelvis (ischial tuberosity). With many athletic individuals we see a tendency for lengthened hamstrings at rest due to a anteriorly rotated pelvis. This is especially so in those individuals involved in running based sports and hobbies. These individuals generally look like this.



Picture from ericcressey.com

The problem with this position is that the hamstrings are positionally long, hence they will not be working optimally due to the lengthened position.

Unless pelvic position is improved and moved towards neutrality the hamstrings will never be able to work optimally.

#3

The hamstrings are doing too many jobs

Simply put, the hamstrings are doing their job and the job of other structures. A great example to use for this might be someone that is lacking stability around the

pelvis. As a result the hamstrings, built as prime movers not stabilisers, might be asked to provide stability to the pelvis. Ultimately this gives the hamstrings more work to do and as result injury is more likely to occur. The hamstrings are not made as stabilisers so we don't want them used to stabilise.

Unless pelvis stability improvement in such an individual is improved the hamstrings will continue to do too much and increased risk of injury is likely.

In conclusion, I hope this post provides an insight into some of the reasons more conventional hamstring rehab plans fail to prevent reoccurrence and provide substance that it is always important to not only diagnose an injury, but also determine what caused the injury.

Think twice about stretching those 'tight' hamstrings.

Please share if you found this helpful,

Thanks for reading

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