

Why Do You Have Tight Hips?

Most people do not give much thought to their hip muscles until they begin hurting. Did you know your hips are among the largest joints in your body, flexing, extending, and rotating to help you twist, turn, sit, and squat? Your hips get a lot more wear and tear than you can imagine.

Most people assume when their hips begin aching that they injured them or did something wrong in the gym.

However, most achy, or tight hips aren't caused by injuries. They typically are a result of spending too many hours in a specific position or performing repetitive movements throughout the day. One example of this would be sitting. When you are seated, your hip flexors shorten. (Need more information about hip flexors? See Amanda.) At the same time your hip extensors on the back of your thigh lengthen, causing an imbalance. Think about it: if you have an 8-hour desk job, drive in your car 1 hour per day, and then sit for 2 hours watching TV or reading, your hips are easily crunched and out of balance for close to 12 hours a day. This doesn't include sleeping!

A few steps to undo the damage:

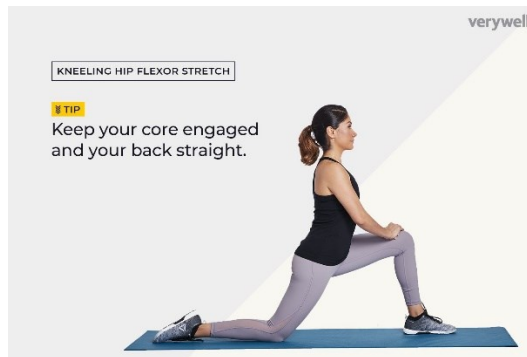
- **Divide all your sitting with frequent breaks.** Get up from your desk every 30 minutes. Take a short walk to the restroom, water fountain, or wherever is convenient for you. If you are at home, fold laundry (exciting I know!), check the mail, empty the dishwasher, or walk outside to get fresh air.
- **Stand** while you are on the phone, texting, or at your desk. If you can pace around the house or your office, then do so. This will help with the amount of time you are seated. Keep moving if you're texting or scrolling on social media.

A few steps to undue the damage:

- Try sleeping in a different position. If you always sleep on your side, then try sleeping on your back (even if it is just to start). You may flip, but at least this will be a decent amount of time off your hips.
- Exercise-Movement is a great way to stretch and strengthen your hips for better range of motion, support, and overall mobility. Be sure to begin your exercise with a 5-to-10-minute aerobic warm-up such as walking, biking, or low impact cardio. This allows your muscles to become warm.

4 great stretches for your hips:

Move 1: Kneeling Hip-flexor Stretch.



2-4 repetitions for a total of 60 seconds for each leg

Begin in a kneeling position with your knees directly under your hips. Slide your right foot forward so that your right knee is directly over your right ankle at a 90-degree angle. Next, place both hands on your right thigh to help maintain a straight, tall spine. Pull your shoulders down and back without arching your low back. Engage your abdominal muscles to stiffen the spine and keep your pelvis stable. Lean forward into your right hip while keeping your left knee pressed into the ground (don't allow your pelvis to rotate forward).

To increase the stretch, squeeze and contract your left glute muscles. Stretch to the point of slight discomfort, but not pain, for 10-30 seconds. Repeat on the other side.



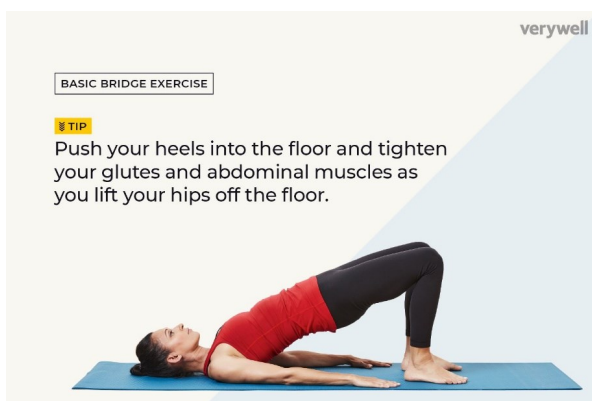
Stretch 2: Cobra.



2-4 repetitions for a total of 60 seconds

Lie face-down on your stomach with your palms on the floor and hands facing forward directly under your shoulders. Then, extend your legs and flex your ankles with your toes pointing away from your body. Gently exhale and press your hips into the floor while pulling your chest up off the ground. You should feel an arch in your low back and a stretch in your chest and abdominal muscles. Hold for 10 to 30 seconds. Gently relax your upper body and lower it to the floor.

Stretch 3: Glute Bridge.



2-4 sets of 8-12 repetitions

Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor hip-distance apart. Gently contract your abdominal muscles to flatten your lower back into the floor. Exhale, contract your glutes, and lift your hips upwards off the ground without arching your back. Press your heels into the floor for additional stability. Slowly inhale and lower your upper body to the floor to return to the starting position.

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Stretch 4: Single-leg Romanian Deadlift.



2 – 4 sets of 8 to 12 repetitions

Start in a standing position with your feet hip-width apart. Keep your back tall and straight and your knees slightly bent. Slowly lean your upper body forward and allow your arms to hang straight downward. Simultaneously lift your left leg backward off the ground so that it is straight and parallel to the floor. Lean forward to a comfortable distance, keeping your back straight. Slowly return to standing by squeezing your right glute while swinging the left leg down towards the floor. Repeat on the opposite side.