

Tight Hip Flexors from Backcountry Skiing?



The repetitive movements in backcountry skiing of skinning and hiking can stress and shorten the hip flexor muscle group. Hip flexors affect the position of the pelvis, which in turn affects the position and movement of the lower back. Most problems with the hip flexors, however, don't originate in a lack of strength but in a lack of flexibility. Keep in mind that prolonged sitting, not just overuse, can also cause the hip flexors to shorten. To understand

how these muscles lose their flexibility, imagine someone with a broken arm, her bent elbow encased in a plaster cast. When the cast is removed after six or eight weeks, the soft tissues around the elbow (muscles, tendons, ligaments, and even skin) will have shortened, and the elbow won't straighten out. It will take patient stretching over several weeks to restore the range of motion. Similarly, if the hip is constantly kept in a flexed position—like boot packing or skinning—for hours every day, day after day, the hip flexors will shorten and shrink, limiting your ability to fully extend (straighten) the hip.

Seven muscles cross the front of the hip and create hip flexion or pulling the thigh and trunk toward each other. The most important of the hip flexors, is the iliopsoas. It is actually composed of two muscles, the iliacus and the psoas, which lie deep in the back of the abdomen. If you looked at the front of a body with the internal organs removed, you would see the psoas lying alongside the spine, attached to the sides of the lumbar vertebrae. The iliacus originates on the inner bowl of the pelvis. Both muscles cross the floor of the pelvis, emerge at the outer edges of the pubic bones, and finally insert on the inner upper femur

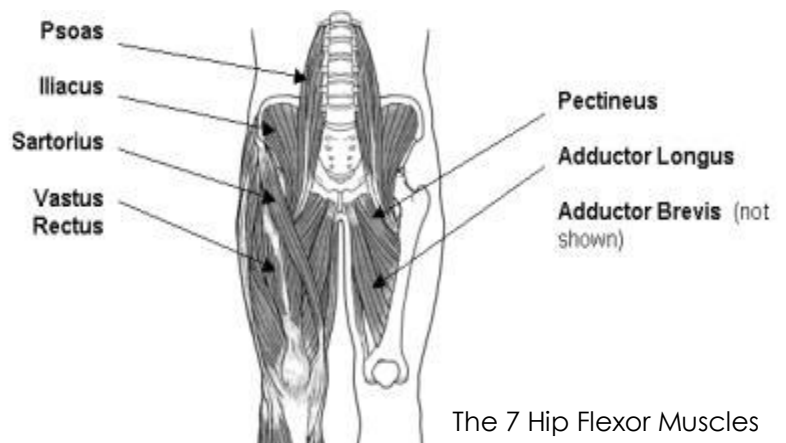
(thighbone). Because the muscles are buried so deep, we can't see or touch them, so it's easy to understand why there is much confusion about their location and action.

If the iliopsoas and other hip flexors are tight, they pull the pelvis down and forward. Tilting the pelvis forward compresses the lower back. Picture a man standing with the front of his pelvis tilting forward and down towards the floor and his tailbone lifting toward the ceiling. To stand upright, he has to over-arch his lower back. Anatomically, this is called hyperextension; commonly, it's called "swayback." Repetitive movements involving hip flexion or prolonged sitting in this

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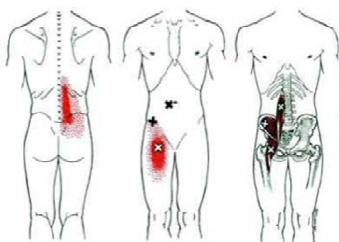
Happy Valentine's Day!

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Tight Hip Flexors from Backcountry Skiing cont.

position increases pressure on the facet joints of the lower spine, which can contribute to arthritis and pain in those joints. Trigger points and muscle spasm within the iliopsoas mimic low back pain, hip pain and leg pain individually or in combination. Classic symptoms of an iliopsoas muscle spasm are diffuse aching-type low back pain of a few days onset. The history is generally not specific to an injury. The pain seems to spread to the rest of the low back, lower ribcage and even into the gluteal and lateral hip regions. Most often a key factor is initial pain upon rising from a seated position which may dissipate in a short time. It is difficult to stand upright quickly after bending forward to tie a shoelace. Standing, walking and laying down don't seem to affect it badly. Relief of pain is often experienced by sitting down. However, extending the leg, as in driving, can make the pain worse.



Release. The most effective way to loosen your Psoas is with a massage therapist, especially if this is an acute pain. Chroni-

cally tight short hip flexors can be addressed with self massage with the use of a ball slightly larger & softer than a tennis ball. This massage technique releases your Psoas through an active range of motion.

- Lay on the ball, about 1-2 inches outside your belly button.
- You'll feel your Psoas respond as you lower yourself. It will hurt a little.
- Arch your back; come up onto your elbows. This will result in a more forceful stretch and release on your Psoas.



Activate Your Glutes.

Active glutes will help inhibit and relax your Psoas. Try the Single Leg Bridge with Knee lift. The lifted knee stretches the opposite Psoas.

- Lay on your back, feet flat on the floor, knees up.
- Hug one knee toward your chest
- Press through the heel raising your hips off the floor. Create a straight line from knee through the thigh, hips, and abdominals to your shoulders.



Another hip flexor muscle, the **rectus femoris**, is also impacted by skinning and bootpacking. The rectus femoris is one of the quadriceps muscles on the front of the thigh. It originates near the round bony protuberance on the front of the hip (A.S.I.S.), runs down the center of the thigh, and inserts on the shinbone (tibia) just below the knee. When the rectus femoris contracts and shortens, it not only extends or straightens the knee, it also flexes the hip.

To stretch the rectus femoris, we need a pose that flexes the knee and extends the hip.

- Sit down between your heels and lie back in this pose. You will feel the rectus femoris and deep hip flexors lengthen.



If your hip flexors are not long enough to allow the pelvis to tilt all the way back, compression and discomfort in the lower back can occur.



Modification

- To stretch the rectus femoris without compressing the lower back, place a bolster

or folded blankets under your back in this stretch, with enough height to keep some length in the lower back.

Alternately, if the reclining rectus femoris pose is too intense for your knees, try this stretch:

- Place a folded towel beneath your back knee in a kneeling lunge
- Sink your hips forward creating an extension through the back hip
- Keep your hips aligned and pointing forward as you bend the knee of the back leg bringing your heel towards your hips.



A GU Review

Whether you are a skier, climber, runner, biker or paddler you've probably choked down a few gel type foods in your life to keep you fueled. Here a few of our favorites.

Honey Stinger Energy Gel



- 5 flavors; Gold, Ginsting, Banana, Chocolate & Strawberry.
- Made from pure honey from the USA, water, sodium, potassium, B complex vitamins and all-natural flavors.
- Strawberry and Ginsting flavors contain kola nut extract which is a natural source of caffeine
- 120 Calories

Yummy. Easy to swallow and digest, even when running. Thinnest consistency. No weird chemically after taste.

The Organic Chews are delicious too!

Hammer Gel



- 8 Flavors; Apple Cinnamon, Banana, Chocolate, Espresso, Montana Huckleberry, Orange, Raspberry, Tropical, and Vanilla
- Single-serving pouches or the cost-effective 26 serving jugs and used with the Hammer Flasks
- Made with real fruit and wholesome ingredients
- Espresso and Tropical contain caffeine
- Gluten-free and vegan friendly
- 90 Calories

Chocolate & Mountain Huckleberry were my favorite flavors. Had to consume more water to get these down as the gel is the thickest of those reviewed.

Clif Shot Energy Gel



- 8 Flavors; Vanilla, Mocha, Razz, Double Espresso, Chocolate, Strawberry, Citrus, Chocolate Cherry
- Liter leash keeps the top tear away tab attached
- Mocha, Double Espresso, Strawberry, Citrus and Chocolate Cherry contain caffeine
- 100 Calories
- Brown Rice Syrup

Really like the liter leash.

Made form mostly organic ingredients.

Razz and Chocolate top the flavor list.

GU Energy Gel



- 10 Flavors; Vanilla Bean, Chocolate Outrage, Just Plain, Mandarin Orange, Tri-Berry, Mint Chocolate, Espresso Love, Jet Blackberry, Lemon Sublime, Strawberry Banana
- Vanilla Bean, Chocolate Outrage, Just Plain, Mandarin Orange, Tri-Berry, Mint Chocolate, Espresso Love, Jet Blackberry contain caffeine
- 100 Calories
- Maltodextrin

Never upset my stomach. Tri-berry, Mandarin Orange and Lemon Sublime make your taste buds water.

Peak Bodywork

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A Couple's Massage might be romantic...but show your special someone how much you care with

"A Couple of Massages!"

Valentine's Day Special

"A Couple of Massages" Gift Certificates

Two 60 minute massage for \$130

Two 90 minute massages for \$190



A Life of Passion *Getting Back To What You Love*



There are times in life when we are committed to pursuing our passions. Every molecule in our body is focused on doing what we love. At other times, necessity and responsibility dictate that we put our dreams aside and do what needs to be done. It is during these moments that we may choose to forget what it is that we love to do. There

are many other reasons for why we may leave our passions behind. A hobby may lose its appeal once we've realize it will never turn into our dream job. Someone important to us may keep telling us that our passions are childish and unsuitable - until we finally believe them.

Forgetting about what you love to do can be a form of self-sabotage. If you can forget about your dreams, then you never have to risk failure. But just because we've decided to ignore our passions doesn't mean they no longer exist.

Nothing can fill the emptiness that remains in a space vacated by a passion that we have tossed aside. Besides, life is too short to stop doing what you love, and it is never too late to rediscover your favorite things. If you gave up playing an instrument, painting, drawing, spending time in nature, or any other activity or interest that you once loved to do, now may be the time to take up that passion again. If you don't remember what it is that you used to be passionate about, you may want to think about the activities or interests

that you used to love or the dreams that you always wished you could pursue.

You don't have to neglect your responsibilities to pursue your passions, and you don't have to neglect your commitments to do what you love. When you make an effort to incorporate your interests into your life, the fire within you ignites. You feel excited, inspired, and fed by the flames that are sparked by living your life with passion for what you love.



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