



Hamstring Health

The hamstrings are three muscles at the back of the thigh - semitendinosus, semimembranosus, and biceps femoris. They attach at the hip and knee and are responsible for extending the hip and bending the knee.

Hamstring injuries often result from overstretching or overloading. Overstretching happens when the hip is bent and the knee is straight (e.g., kicking or bending forward with straight legs). Overloading occurs during lengthening contractions, such as when controlling knee straightening.



Experiencing tightness into the hamstrings is another common complaint, which can occur for several reasons:

Lack of Flexibility



Inactivity and not regularly moving through a full range of motion.

Prolonged Sitting



Keeps hamstrings in a shortened position, reducing flexibility

Muscle Imbalance



Tight or strong hip or thigh muscles can pull on the pelvis, which increases tension on the hamstrings

Overuse or Fatigue



Running, performing unaccustomed work, or doing heavy leg workouts, can cause small strains due to the stress placed on the muscle fibers.

Nerve Tension



Sometimes nerve tension from the sciatic nerve can mimic hamstring tightness but it does not improve with stretching.



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Strengthening your hamstrings can help prevent injuries, enhance athletic performance, improve posture, and increase knee stability. Strong hamstrings are more resilient to sudden, high-force loads that can occur when running, jumping, or quickly changing direction and help balance the forces around the knee and hip. *Try the exercises below, starting on your back with your knees bent. Keep your buttocks and abdominals tight and avoid arching your back or letting your hips drop. Begin with 1-3 sets of 10-15 repetitions.*

EASIER → Single Leg Bridge

Lift one foot off the floor, keeping the knee bent at 90°. Slowly raise your hips into a bridge, hold briefly, then lower with control. Repeat. Perform on both legs.



HARDER → Elevated Single Leg Bridge

Place one foot on a step or block, with the other knee bent at 90°. Slowly raise your hips into a bridge, hold briefly, then lower with control. Repeat. Perform on both legs.



EASIER → Double Leg Bridge with Slider

Place sliders or paper plates under your heels. Lift your hips into a bridge, then slowly slide your heels forward to lower your body toward the floor. Keep the movement slow and controlled.



HARDER → Single Leg Bridge with Slider

Place a slider or paper plate under one heel, with the other knee bent at 90°. Lift your hips into a bridge, then slowly slide the heel forward to lower your body. Keep the movement slow and controlled. Repeat. Perform on both legs.





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EASIER → Bridge with Hamstring Curl on Swiss Ball

Lie with legs straight and feet resting on a Swiss ball. Lift your hips into a bridge, then slowly roll the ball toward you by bending your knees. Maintain the bridge as you straighten your legs. Repeat.

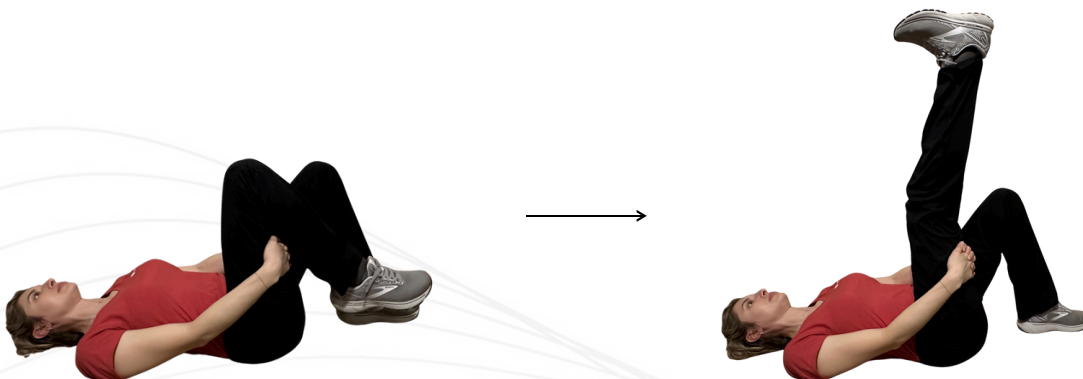


HARDER → Bridge with Hamstring Curl on Swiss Ball

Lie with legs straight and one foot on a Swiss ball, the other knee bent at 90°. Lift your hips into a bridge, then slowly roll the ball toward you with by bending your knee. Maintain the bridge as you straighten your leg. Repeat. Perform on both legs.



If the tightness in your hamstrings is nerve related, try this gentle nerve glide. Nerve glides are not the same as stretches; they are slow, controlled movements that are not held for a long period of time. A mild tingling or light stretch is normal, but you should not feel sharp pain or increasing discomfort.



Lie on your back with your knees bent. Place your hands behind your thigh and gently pull your toes and ankle up toward your shoulder. Slowly straighten your knee until you feel gentle tension. Perform 10 repetitions, 1-3 times per day.