Hip Pain
Healthshare Information for Guided Patient Management
Introduction
The aim of this information leaflet is to give you some understanding of the problems you may have with your hip. It has been divided into sections, describing the hip joint and surrounding structures, what we know about hip problems and your treatment options.

- Please read the following before doing any of the exercises described.
- The information contained in this guide is intended to assist in managing your recovery.
- This information is based on the latest available evidence from research in the field and to the best of our knowledge.
- If you have any doubts you should consult your health professional.
- Please take this information to your health professional, should you need to see them in future.
- If you need further information, please do not hesitate to email us at enquiry@healthshare.org.uk.

About your hip
The hip is a ball and socket joint. It sits deep within the body, where the top of the thigh bone rotates inside the hip socket. The joint is supported by strong ligaments, tendons and muscles. The role of the hip is to support the body both when standing still and when running or walking. A hip problem can cause you to feel pain in the groin, buttock or thigh area. Typically pain will be felt during weight bearing and when bringing your knee towards your chest e.g. putting shoes, socks on, getting in and out of the car/bath.

Anatomy of the Hip
Common causes of hip pain

Osteoarthritis: The symptoms of osteoarthritis can vary greatly from person to person, but if it affects the hip it will typically cause:

- Mild inflammation of the tissues in and around the hip joint.
- Damage to cartilage (the strong, smooth surface that lines the bones) osteoarthritis is a slow process that develops over many years, as we get older the water content of joint cartilage reduces which increases joint friction leading to an increased risk of cartilage damage.
- As the joint cartilage thins the bone reacts by thickening and producing bony growths (osteophytes) that develop around the edge of the hip joint, this can cause a clicking or grinding sound to be heard.
- Osteoarthritis can lead to pain, stiffness and difficulty doing certain activities.
- These changes to the mechanics of the joint produce a pattern of movement restriction which can be felt on physical examination. The changes can also be seen on an x-ray.
- There is no cure for osteoarthritis, but the symptoms can be eased with several different treatments and surgery is often not necessary.
- If you are suffering with osteoarthritis and conservative treatments such as physiotherapy and medication have not improved your symptoms, you may be referred to a specialist physiotherapist or doctor. They can assess you and decide on the need for hip replacement surgery.
- This operation involves removal of the damaged or worn parts of the hip joint and replacing them with an artificial joint that is made up of metal and/or high density polyethylene.
Trochanteric bursitis/Greater trochanter pain syndrome

Greater trochanteric pain syndrome refers to pain over the outside of your hip joint where you feel the bony prominence called the Greater Trochanter. Pain in this area may have many causes and commonly affects women between the ages 40-60. One of the common causes is inflammation and/or thickening of the bursa (fluid-filled sac) between the tendons and bone on the outside of your hip. This is generally due to:

- Tight or weak muscles around the hip joint
- An increase or change of activity
- Following a trauma e.g. a fall onto your side
- Poor biomechanics e.g. wider pelvis or flat feet

Pain is generally aggravated by physical activities such as running, climbing stairs and walking long distance. Lying on your side could affect your sleep and it is often painful to touch. Sometimes pain in this area also referred from your lumbar spine.

1. First line of treatment should include ice and/or anti-inflammatory medication to reduce the inflammation and swelling. Always consider seeking advice from your GP or pharmacist if you are not sure about taking anti-inflammatory medications.
2. General exercises such as swimming or cycling to improve fitness and reduce weight loss will help to improve the pain.
3. Your physiotherapist may advise on soft tissue and/or joint manipulations and also specific exercises to improve the strength and reduce the tightness of the muscles.
4. In persistent cases a corticosteroid injection into the bursa may help to alleviate the inflammation.
5. Surgery is rarely an option for this condition.
**Impingement**

Hip impingement generally occurs when the ball of the femur does not have enough room to move inside the socket causing abnormal contact or pressure over the bony edges. This could lead to irritation or fraying of the cartilage at the end of your socket known as the labrum.

1. The ball may be too big for the socket or may have a small bump where the ball cannot roll into the cup.
2. The cup might cover the ball causing less space for the ball to move.
3. Although hip impingement generally occurs due to abnormally shaped bones one can also experience similar symptoms due to muscle weakness or tightness.
4. Abnormal bone shapes are seen in many people with no symptoms and one may not get any symptoms during their life time.
5. Generally hip impingement symptoms are commonly reported during the early 30s and it is also seen as a cause for hip osteoarthritis in people younger than 60.

**The main symptoms are**

1. Stiffness in the groin or front of the thigh and/or a loss of your hip full range of motion.
2. At first, you may only feel pain when you move the hip near its limits. As the condition progresses, however, you may feel pain with more subtle activities, such as sitting for a long time or walking up a hill.
3. Pain that occurs at night or when walking on flat ground suggests early osteoarthritis or synovitis associated with hip impingement.
4. Your physiotherapist may be able to diagnose hip impingement through physical examination and advise on the need for further investigations such as an x-ray.
Hip impingement is generally managed with conservative treatment which primarily involves modifying the activities that increase your hip pain. Avoiding activities which involve bending your hip beyond 90 degrees would be particularly helpful.

Specific strengthening and stretching exercises guided by your physiotherapist would help to address imbalance in your muscles and also improve hip mobility. Pain killers and/or anti-inflammatory medication may help to ease your pain during the acute stages and help you to carry out exercises effectively to improve your hip pain in the long run. In some cases steroid injections are considered for pain relief following an assessment with a specialist physiotherapist, doctor or orthopaedic consultant.

Hip arthroscopy (key hole surgery) is commonly considered in patients younger than 30 with hip impingement symptoms. However there is no definitive surgical treatment available for hip impingement so far. The need for surgery and the type of procedure will depend on the problems causing hip impingement.

**Referred lower back pain**
- Buttock, groin and trochanteric hip pain can be referred from your lumbar spine due to the nerves supply to this region.
- See our lower back pain booklet for more advice.

**What treatments are available?**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medication</th>
<th>Pain killers such as Paracetamol and/or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medication may be suggested by your GP and can be beneficial in reducing pain and inflammation.</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Ice and Heat     | Ice packs are often useful to relieve pain, reduce inflammation and reduce muscle spasms. When applying the ice you should ensure you use something like a wet flannel between the ice pack and the skin for protection. Ice should be applied for 20-30mins, but you should check the area regularly. 

Heat causes blood vessels to dilate (expand) this brings more blood into the area to stimulate healing of damaged tissues. It also has a direct soothing effect and helps to relieve pain and spasm. It can also ease stiffness by making the tissues suppler, and is therefore useful to do before stretching. If you are using heat make sure the heat source is not too hot to avoid burns. A towel can be placed between the heat source and the skin for protection and the skin must be checked at regular intervals. |
| Weight Control   | It is important that you maintain a healthy weight and balanced diet to ensure you are taking in all the nutrients needed for healing and repair. It is important to maintain a healthy weight as increased body weight will put excess strain on your hips and worsen most hip problems. |
| Physical Aids    | If you have pain in your hip when walking try using a walking stick. Hold it in the hand on the opposite side of the body to the affected joint. This takes some pressure off the affected joint and helps to ease symptoms in some cases. |
| Physiotherapy   | Your physiotherapist may teach you an exercise programme which will aim to strengthen the muscles that support and move the hip and improve its flexibility. They may also consider joint and soft tissue manual techniques. Treatment techniques such as TENS or acupuncture have also shown to be beneficial for improving pain and function in some cases. |
| Joint Injections | Corticosteroid injections are sometimes used to reduce pain in certain hip problems. In osteoarthritis the steroid is injected into the hip joint to help reduce inflammation associated with osteoarthritis. In trochanteric bursitis the steroid injection can help to reduce inflammation but if the factors that initially caused the bursa to become inflamed, e.g. weakness/poor biomechanics, change in activity are not addressed then the bursa will become inflamed again. |
### What exercise should I do?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercise Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stretching Exercises</td>
<td>These exercises help to improve the length of the muscles and soft tissues around the hips. This helps to increase the flexibility of the joint to allow greater freedom of movement. It is common to develop muscle imbalances around the hip. Hip stretches are part of a treatment plan to address these. In people that sit at work for long periods of time hip flexors and rotators can become tight. This can affect gait, posture, spinal stability, and movement patterns.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strengthening Exercises</td>
<td>The muscles around the hips are there for support and movement. With prolonged sitting the gluteal muscles in particular can become weak. Any weakness can lead to an imbalance and increased risk of injury. Strengthening the supporting muscles helps to keep the joint stable and relieve any abnormal stresses.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aerobic Exercise</td>
<td>Aerobic or endurance exercises help with your overall fitness. They can help you improve you cardiovascular health, help control your weight and give you more stamina. Low impact exercise such as swimming and cycling can help to maintain joint health, reduce pain, and help you maintain bone strength. Research has found that low impact fitness activities may also promote the healing and recovery of damaged joints. Try to work your way up to 20 to 30 minutes of aerobic exercise three times a week. You can split up that time into 10-minute blocks if that's easier on your joints.</td>
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Exercise for Hip Pain

**Joint capsule stretches**

Lying on your back.

Bend the knee of the leg you are stretching towards your chest keeping your head on the floor.

Hold 20-30 seconds. Repeat 5-10 times.

Lying on your back.

Bring your leg out to the side until you feel a stretch.

Hold for 20-30 seconds then bring back to the mid position. Repeat 5-10 times.

Stand with the knee and lower part of the leg you want to stretch resting on chair. Bring the other leg in front and lung forwards so that your knee goes behind your hip. Feel the stretch at the front of your hip.

Hold 20-30 seconds. Repeat 5-10 times.
Exercise for Hip Pain

Joint capsule stretches

Lying on your side with the leg you want to stretch on the top. Take hold of your ankle if you can reach, or wrap a towel round your ankle and use this to gently pull on.

Try to get your knee behind your hip and gently draw your foot up towards your buttock. Feel the stretch in your thigh.

Hold 20-30 seconds. Repeat 5 times.

Muscle Stretches

Sitting on a chair with your foot on the opposite knee, gently push your knee towards the floor.

Hold 20-30 seconds. Repeat 5 times.

Lying on your side with the leg you want to stretch on the top. Take hold of your ankle if you can reach, or wrap a towel round your ankle and use this to gently pull on.

Stand with the leg to be stretched on a chair with knee straight and ankle flexed. The higher the chair the bigger the stretch, feel the stretch on the inside of your leg. To stretch further bend your trunk sideways towards the leg. Hold 20-30 seconds. Repeat 5 times. Support yourself with your hand on a wall if necessary.
Exercise for Hip Pain

**Muscle Stretches/Continued**

Stand with the leg to be stretched on a chair, heel resting on the chair. Straighten your knee and bend your trunk forwards keeping your back straight.

Hold 20-30 seconds. Repeat 5 times.

Standing, hold onto a support if you need to. Cross the leg that you are wanting to stretch behind your other leg, lean away from the hip of the side you are stretching.

Hold 20-30 seconds. Repeat 5 times.

Sit on the floor (or on your bed) with one leg straight and the leg you are wanting to stretch crossed over it.

Bring your knee towards the opposite shoulder, to push it further reach your arm over and push it behind you shoulder. Feel the stretch in your buttock.

Hold 20-30 seconds.
Exercise for Hip Pain

**Strengthening exercises**

Lying on your back, contract your abdominals flattening your lower back against the floor.

Bend your leg bringing your knee above your hip, slowly straighten out to lower.

Repeat 10-20 times.

Standing holding onto a support.

Lift your leg sideways and bring it back keeping your trunk straight throughout the exercise.

To make this exercise more difficult add an ankle weight or a resistance band.

Repeat 10-20 times.

Standing straight holding onto a chair.

Bring your leg backwards keeping your knee straight. Do not lean forwards. To make this exercise more difficult add an ankle weight or a resistance band.

Repeat 10-20 times.
Exercise for Hip Pain

Strengthening exercises/Continued

1. Lying on your side lift the upper leg straight up with the ankle flexed.
   Repeat 10-20 times.

2. Lying on your back with your knees bent and feet on the floor.
   Lift your pelvis and lower back off the floor. Hold the position if you can. Lower down slowly returning to the starting position.
   Repeat 10 times.

3. Lie on your side with your knees bent and legs together. Lift your upper knee up keeping your ankles together and making sure you don't let your pelvis roll backwards.
   Repeat 10-20 times.
Notes