

# Lateral Hip pain

Your GP or Physiotherapist may have diagnosed you with '*Lateral Hip Pain*' or '*Greater Trochanteric Pain Syndrome*' (GTPS) or '*Hip Bursitis*'. These are all different terms to describe the same complaint; pain arising from the soft tissues on the outside of your hip.

Lateral hip pain is fairly common and presents with pain down the outside of the hip and sometimes down the side of the leg. Fortunately, it can be managed very effectively following some simple advice and performing exercises regularly over a course of a few months. The following information is designed to help you self-manage your pain and eventually return to all your normal daily activities.

## What can I do to help?

If you are struggling with your pain, the following initial advice should help you to get started:

**Pain relief:** Basic painkillers (like paracetamol) or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory gels, (such as Ibuleve or Voltarol) are cheap and easily available over the counter without the need for prescription. These can be very effective as they lessen your discomfort and importantly allow you to keep your hip moving. However, please check the labels for instructions/safe usage and any possible reasons why you should not use them. If you are currently taking any form of medication it is advisable to consult your GP or pharmacist before taking additional pain relief.

**Heat or Ice:** Heat is often useful for easing pain using a hot water bottle or wheat pack. Use for 15-20 minutes at a time and repeat several times a day as necessary. However, if you have had a recent injury or flare up you may find it more therapeutic to use an ice pack to reduce your pain/irritation. A packet of frozen peas wrapped in a tea-towel works well. Leave in place for up to 15 minutes at a time. Again, this can be repeated several times a day if found helpful.

**Rest vs. activity:** It is usually best to carry out your normal activities, but try not to overdo it. Let pain be your guide; short-lasting/temporary discomfort is fine but worsening or constant 24/7 pain indicates you are likely doing too much and need to take things a little easier. You need to pace yourself to start with and try to do a bit more each few days. You will find keeping moving gently more comfortable than complete rest. It is also typical to be quite stiff and sore after prolonged periods of rest, ie. sitting for a while or first thing in the morning. This is quite typical and will eventually lessen as you improve.

**Sleeping position:** You may find it best to sleep with a pillow between your knees if you prefer to sleep on your side. This is to avoid prolonged tension across your hip. You will unlikely tolerate lying on your painful side for long periods of time.

**Sitting:** It is best to avoid prolonged sitting with your legs crossed to avoid prolonged compression/tension of the irritated hip.

## Exercise

Exercise can be an extremely beneficial treatment for your lateral hip pain as it can gradually build the tolerance and load-capacity of your tissues and help ease stiffness and soreness. Hips can respond really well to gradual loading programme over a course of a few months.

Please try this exercise programme 1-2 times a day. A small increase in your discomfort is OK if it goes away within 20-30 minutes. If your pain doesn't settle within this timeframe then let it settle with rest then perform the exercises gentler the next time and then gradually build up as able. It may take 5-6 weeks before you start to see improvement. Eventually you can start to make the exercises harder as you progress.

### Exercises 1a – Early Stage Lateral Hip Loading

Stand holding on to a chair for balance near to a wall on your painful side

Stand on your good leg and push the side of the foot of your affected side very gently into the wall. Aim for a completely-comfortable 20-30 second sustained gentle push.

Rest 30-60 seconds. Repeat sequence 3-4 times in one set. Aim 2-3 sets daily as tolerated



\*If you find this exercise seems to be aggravating the other hip; you can also achieve light loading by lying on your side and performing a sideways leg lift. It helps to use a pillow under the leg.

*(You may want to start with having the leg slightly bent to help less the load or use a length of tubigrip to assist with the lift.)*

Continue until you achieve just a slight/short-lasting discomfort that goes within 20-30mins.



It is important to gradually increase the amount of repetitions as you are able to perform over a course of 3-6 months. These small gains will eventually become meaningful to you as they will help you tolerate the more demanding tasks/activities such as longer walks or prolonged standing as you slowly improve.

### Exercise 1b – Advanced Stage Lateral Hip Loading

An easy progression once you reach a certain stage would simply be single leg standing (on the troubled leg). Don't perform until you can easily perform this for 15 seconds without long lasting discomfort.

Stand holding on to a chair – aim to stand on your sore leg until you start to get a slight fatigue/discomfort.

Build up time stood as comfortably tolerated – aiming for short lasting discomfort that goes within 20-30mins. Aim eventually for 1-2 minutes.



### Exercise 2- Piriformis Stretch

Lie down on your back. Place your affected leg's ankle on the opposite knee

Reach forwards and pull the good leg towards you until you feel a tolerable stretch in the affected side's buttock. If it is a struggle to reach then you could use a towel around the shin to pull instead.

You can also perform in sitting as shown. Place the affected leg's ankle on the opposite knee then lean forwards to achieve the stretch.

Hold 30 seconds



### Exercises 3 – Self Soft Tissue Massage

You may find it helpful to massage any tender soft tissue areas of your buttock using a tennis ball against a wall. Find the most tender spots and keep the pressure on until the associated pain fades (can take between 10-90 seconds). Then move to another area and repeat if you find this therapeutic. Avoid pressing over the bony part of your lateral hip you will probably just find this irritable.

This will only give short lasting relief but can be used regularly to give you comfort whilst you progress with your hip strengthening programme. Stop simply if you find it too aggravating and not helping.



### Exercise 4 – Hip Bridging

Lying on your back with your knee bents and feet on the ground.

Clench your buttocks and just curl your tail bone off the ground. Keep your back relaxed. All the feeling of effort should be felt in your buttocks only, not your back. Lower slowly.

Repeat until you achieve just a slight/short-lasting discomfort that goes within 20-30mins.

You can also perform with just one leg. Keep the other leg relaxed on the bed and just lift the one hip a little way off the ground only.

If you are experiencing cramping in the hamstrings then you are going beyond your own means at the moment. Continue with the exercise but just lift to a height that doesn't cause cramping

