

What is Greater Trochanteric Pain Syndrome?

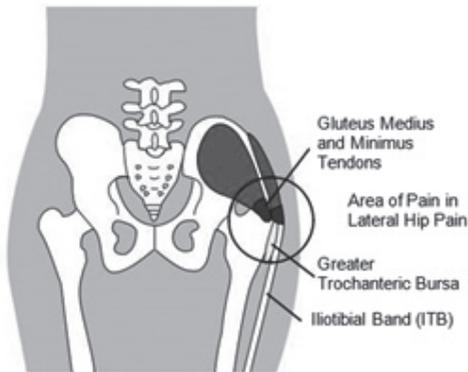
An information guide



What is Greater Trochanteric Pain Syndrome?

What is it?

Greater Trochanteric Pain Syndrome (GTPS) is a term used to describe pain on the outside of your hip. In most cases this is due to minor injury or irritation of tissues that lie over the bony prominence (the greater trochanter) at the top of the thigh bone (femur). Commonly the condition resolves on its own over time.



Greater trochanteric pain syndrome used to be called trochanteric bursitis. This was because the pain was thought to be coming from an inflamed bursa that lies over the greater trochanter. A bursa is a small sac filled with fluid which helps to allow smooth movement between two uneven surfaces.

Research suggests that most cases of greater trochanteric pain syndrome are due to irritation of the nearby muscles, tendons or fascia, and not the bursa. So, rather than the term trochanteric bursitis, the more general term, greater trochanteric pain syndrome, is now preferred.

Causes

Causes of GTPS include:

- An injury such as a fall on to the side of your hip area.
- Underlying weakness and tightness in the muscles around the hip
- Repetitive movements involving your hip area, such as excessive running or walking.
- Prolonged or excessive pressure to your hip area (e.g. the more sedentary you are, the greater the risk of developing GTPS).
- Occasionally GTPS can occur following hip surgery if the muscles have not returned to their normal level of strength.
- A difference in your leg length.
- Having a low back pain increases the risk of developing GTPS.

How is greater trochanteric pain syndrome diagnosed?

The diagnosis is usually made based on your symptoms and an examination. You may find the affected area is very tender when pressure is applied. Tests (e.g. X-ray or MRI) are not normally needed.

Your consultant will have considered these prior to sending you for physiotherapy, and are usually only considered when the diagnosis is unclear.

Self-help advice

Greater trochanteric pain syndrome is usually self-limiting. That is, it usually recovers on its own in time. However, it commonly takes several weeks for the pain to ease.

Symptoms can persist for months and sometimes for longer in a small proportion of cases. This does not mean that there is a serious underlying condition or that the hip joint is being damaged.

Moderating activities such as running or excessive walking (particularly on hills) for a while may help to speed up recovery. In addition, the following may be useful:

- Early on, applying an ice pack (wrapped in a towel) for 10-20 minutes several times a day may improve your symptoms.
- Simple pain killers like paracetamol or ibuprofen may help to reduce the pain.
- If you are overweight or obese then losing some weight is likely to improve your symptoms.
- Avoid positions such as lying on the sore side, sitting in low chairs and sitting with crossed legs.
- Physiotherapy is often used and is often very effective.
- If the above measures do not help then an injection into the painful area may be an option.

Exercises for Greater Trochanteric Pain Syndrome

Stretching Exercises (if advised by your Physiotherapist)

Hold all exercises for 15-30 seconds and repeat them three times on each leg.

1 - Lateral Hip stretch



Adopt position shown above. Keep your back straight, slowly lean your chest forwards feeling a pull in your buttock.

2 - ITB Stretch

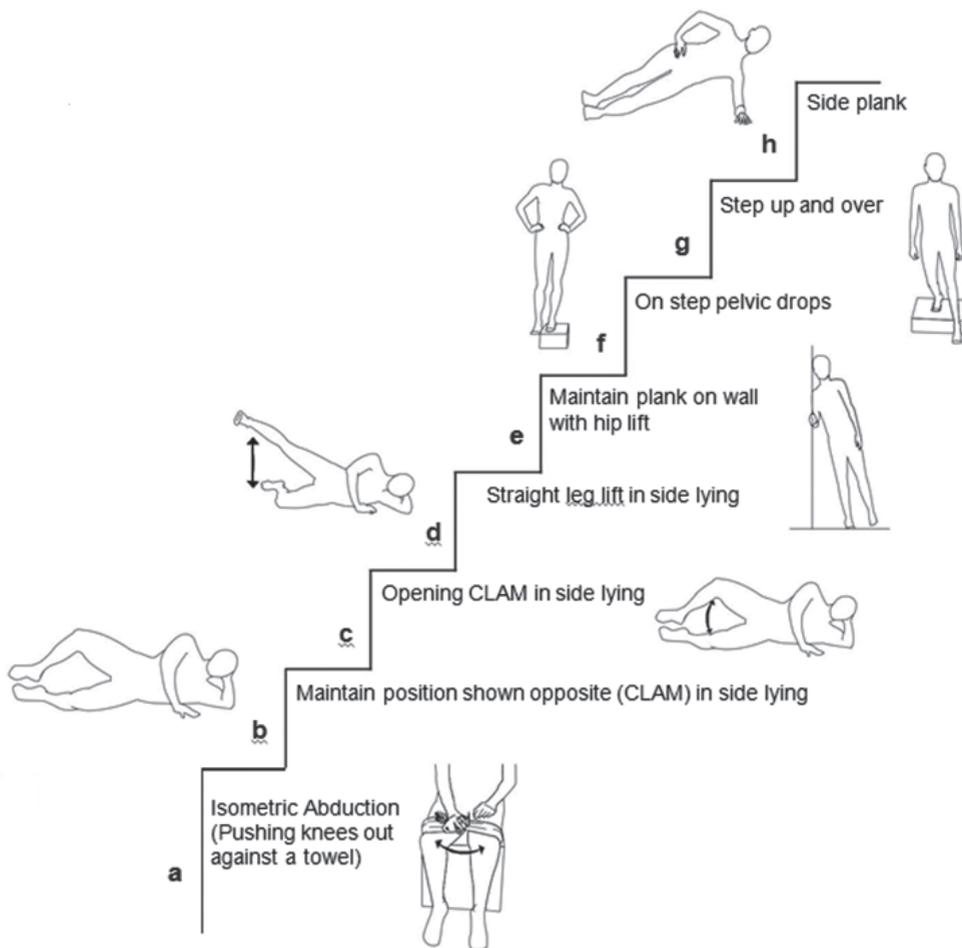


Adopt the position shown above. Take your hips to the left and lean your upper body to the right. Feel it gently pull in the outside of your hip.

3 - Ice pack

If your pain is significant after the exercise Place a small cold pack over the painful area for five to ten minutes per day.

Progressive Strengthening Exercises



Progression Speed

Your physiotherapist will advise you on the rate you should progress your exercise and the level you are aiming towards. You may be given other exercises as well. Progression is not just about being able to do the exercise but to do it correctly. It should be performed with pain that is tolerable.

It is normal to feel fatigue or aching with the exercise, this is what we expect. However, if the pain becomes more severe over time you may need to regress to the previous level on exercise. Continue to do this until you feel able to tolerate the exercise.

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