Greater trochanteric pain syndrome
A patient’s guide
Information for patients, relatives and carers

For more information, please contact:
Physiotherapy Department

Contact Telephone Number: _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

Caring with pride
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What is greater trochanteric pain syndrome?

Greater trochanteric pain syndrome (GTPS) is a common condition that causes pain and tenderness on the outside of the hip bone.

It was previously called trochanteric bursitis, as it was thought the bursa situated on the outer side of the hip was the main cause of symptoms. A bursa is a fluid filled sac which is positioned between a bone and a tendon to act as a cushion. This can become inflamed if it becomes compressed or irritated.

Recent research has shown that the gluteal tendons which attach into this area can also be the cause of pain. Due to the demands put on the tendons over time, minor damage can occur resulting in the muscles around the hip become weaker.
This can set up a vicious circle of pain and muscle weakness.

Irritations of the tendons and bursa from repetitive, daily activities or compression due to certain postures

Weak gluteal muscle

Reduced activity levels

Muscle tightness and muscle fatigue

Stiffness in the hip

Pain
Symptoms of GTPS

Pain is usually felt on the outside of the hip, this may radiate down towards the knee and around the hip. Symptoms often come on gradually over time but can start after a specific activity or injury.

Pain is often aggravated by lying on your hip, climbing stairs, running or sometimes walking.

The area is often particularly tender when touched.

How common is it?

GTPS is a common hip condition. It affects more women than men, typically occurring in people between 40 and 60 years old.

Lower back pain or knee osteoarthritis are often associated with people who suffer GTPS.

How can I ease my pain?

There are certain positions that aggravate GTPS by compressing the tendons and bursa against the thigh bone. Positions where the knee is taken across the body need to be avoided. Often by reducing the compression on the painful structures symptoms can significantly reduce.
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Exercises

Exercises that strengthen the affected muscles on the outside of the hip (gluteal muscles) can also help to ease the pain. By strengthening the gluteal muscles, the body can move normally again and stop the circle of pain.

1. Beginners clam

- Lie down on your side with your painful side on top. Keep your knees together and bent slightly. Place a pillow between your knees. This should reduce any discomfort you have in your painful side.

- Gently relieve the pressure of your top leg from the pillow – imagine you are about to lift your leg up but do not actually lift it fully, your leg should remain in contact with the pillow.

- Hold this position for five seconds then relax.

- Repeat_________times
2. Hip abduction

- Lie down on your back with a pillow under your thighs and your legs hip width apart. Tie a band around your thighs. Push your legs out against the band so you can feel the muscles in your upper legs tense, but don’t move your legs. Hold this position for five seconds then relax.

- Repeat_________times

3. Mini squats

- Stand with your feet shoulder width apart. Hold onto a sturdy object like a work surface or chair for balance.

- Slowly bend your knees slightly to an angle of 45 degrees. As you return to a standing position, push through your heels. Do this slowly and with control.

- Repeat_________times
4. Full clam

- Lie down on your side with your painful side on top. Keep your knees together and bent slightly.

- Keeping your feet together, lift your top knee up towards the ceiling and away from the lower knee. Hold this position for five seconds before slowly lowering your knee to the starting position.

- Repeat______________times.
5. Bridging

- Lie down on your back keeping your knees bent and your feet flat on the bed (picture a). Lift your bottom off the bed as shown in picture b and hold for five seconds, before then lowering down slowly. Repeat_______________times

- To advance the exercises move one leg down the bed a little way before you lift up as shown in picture c. Make sure you keep your hips level and don’t twist. The bent leg will have to work harder to keep your hips level. Hold for five seconds before then lowering down slowly. Repeat_______________times

What if things don’t improve?

Sometimes people with GTPS require a steroid injection into the tissues at the side of the hip, to reduce any inflammation. However, to stop symptoms from reoccurring it is still important to avoid positions of compression and to continue with the exercises.
Tell us what you think of this leaflet

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact: Heather Harrison, Physiotherapy Department, The York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE or telephone 01904 725390.

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