



KNEE PAIN

**HOW TO RELIEVE
NAGGING KNEE PAIN
WITHOUT PAIN KILLERS**

"If Your Knee Hurts, Check Out Your Hip!"

I have seen countless numbers of patients with a primary complaint of knee pain. The causes of the pain are many and varied. Arthritis, sprained ligaments, and torn cartilage often top the list of reasons why a knee can be painful.

However, there are often a considerable number of patients who come to the office armed with a collection of diagnostic tests, x-rays and scans, all of which fail to reveal any specific pathology in the knee. Yet, the patient still has pain. They are usually very frustrated, as they often have gone through multiple evaluations by physicians and performed various formal and informal exercise programs, none of which resulted in an explanation of why they have pain or improved their condition.

After taking their history and examining their knee, I always look a little above the knee at the hip. We rarely think about this, but the muscles of the hip are critical to support the function of our knee. During walking, when you land all of your body weight on your leg, every muscle on that side of the body has to contract in some fashion to control your weight transferring over the foot on the ground. You would lose your balance and fall if these muscles did not contract to support you. If there is one muscle group that is weak or lagging behind, the other parts of the leg get more stress, including the joints.



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Particularly, the muscles on the outside of the hip are the key ones involved in carrying our body weight when we are on one leg. And isn't walking just a series of one- legged stands put together? A lot of the patients I am describing have weakness in these outer hip muscles, collectively referred to as the "hip abductors".

Here is a simple test I use to check the strength of these muscles:

I have the patient stand on the leg with the painful knee, and the other leg held up off the ground next to a counter they can lightly touch for balance. If the hip on the unsupported side starts to drop slightly downward, it signals weakness of the hip abductor muscles on the other side (the side on which they are standing).

I know then that when they walk or run, those hip muscles are not doing their job, and the knee on that side will be getting some mechanical stress as the body starts to drop and twist over the planted leg. This could easily lead to some of the pain sensitive internal structures of the knee becoming strained and irritated.

So, if your knee is hurting, and everyone tells you that nothing seems wrong with the knee, take my little hip test described above. You will likely be surprised at the weakness you never knew you had.

Then, you have to fix that weakness! Here are 3 easy exercises to restore the strength:

1. "The Clam Exercise"- Lie on the non-painful/strong side on the floor with the knees bent in a fetal position. Keeping your waist perfectly still, just lift the top knee up and lower down, like a clam shell opening and closing. Maintain the feet in contact.
Do this until you feel fatigue in the hip muscles of the top leg. Rest for 30 seconds and repeat 2 more times.
2. Stand next to your kitchen counter so you can reach it for balance if necessary. Standing on the leg with the painful knee/weak hip, start

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swinging the other leg forward and backward rapidly, like you were kicking a football. Do this until you feel the fatigue in the hip of the standing leg. Rest for 30 seconds and repeat 2 more cycles.

3. "Hip Hiking"- Stand sideways on the bottom step of your staircase with the weak/painful side and let the stronger/non-painful leg hang from the step. Hold the banister for balance.

Keep the knee of the standing leg straight, and lift the dangling hip/leg upward toward the ceiling by elevating the pelvis and hip. Just think of a string attached to the dangling hip and being drawn up like a puppet. Do 3 sets of 10 repetitions.

Every time I teach these exercises, patients are amazed at their effectiveness in targeting the hip muscles. And, gratefully, these patients begin to report that their knee pain starts to improve!

We adhere to an increasingly rare mission in today's health care environment. We devote personal attention to your care. Our patient is unique to us because we treat you as if you are part of our family. Not only will we make you feel better, we want your experience to be extra special with us. Over 150 local physicians recognize and value our service and have been referring patients and their own family members since 1992.

