BE Fit
PHYSICAL THERAPY

Hamstring strains can be painful, persistent, and often frustrating to deal with, even if the initial injury seemed relatively minor.

The hamstrings are vulnerable to injury given that they control or produce movement at both the knee and the hip and are subject to significant stresses, particularly with running or cutting activities. This is even more likely in people with weak gluteal muscles. It is also important to differentiate true hamstring strains from sciatic or lumbar nerve pain, which can mimic the symptoms.

Strains can present in one of two areas and the location will dictate how they are treated, since they are very different in nature. The first is the high hamstring strain, where pain is felt close to its attachment on the ischial tuberosity - the "sit bone" - and is often described as an ache. These are generally aggravated with compressive loading where the tendon attaches (sitting, driving, kicking, dancing, deep lunges, running uphill) or even when on stretch. The second area is more in the mid-thigh, mid-portion of the muscle bellies. Pain here can be similar in nature, but often has sharper pain patterns, activated during contraction of the muscle.

High Hamstring strains are generally not as painful as the second/lower area, but often take much longer to resolve (can even persist for a year), likely due to the fact that tendons do not have a good blood supply to aid in the healing, whereas the muscle bellies do. Strains in the 2nd area are often much more painful, but usually resolve within 6-12 weeks with proper attention. Recurrence or re-aggravation is common in both areas, since people will often start to feel better and return to higher activity levels without having sufficiently strengthened the problem area to handle these increased demands.

Physical therapy can help guide the diagnosis as well as the recovery process, and improve the odds of a successful and more rapid return to activities. We utilize education and advice, exercise strategies to address both the local injury as well as any muscle imbalances that contributed to the injury, and hands-on soft tissue work to reduce pain and tissue damage. Let us help get you back to the activities you love!

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