

RUNNING INJURIES

PART 2

HAMSTRING STRAINS

By Dr. Boyd Williams
Certified Chiropractic Sports Physician

One of the more frequent injured areas in the running athlete are the hamstring muscles. The hamstrings are a group of muscles which lie in the back part of the leg, running from the bottom of the pelvis at the lower buttocks to the upper part of the lower leg, just below the knee. The hamstrings are usually strained in the acceleration phase of running or jumping. The hamstring muscles are more susceptible to strain if there is a hamstring to quadriceps muscle imbalance, joint dysfunction or lack of proper movement in the sacroiliac joint, inadequate flexibility of the hamstrings or an abnormal running posture.

The athlete's awareness of a hamstring strain depends much upon the degree of injury or tear. A mild hamstring strain may cause muscle stiffness and soreness only with aggressive running and/or jumping. A more serious hamstring strain will probably have a more acute onset, the athlete perhaps noticing a pop in the back of the leg or feeling a sharp pain while running or jumping. Pain will most commonly be felt in the lower part of the buttock or upper leg with activities which require contraction of the hamstring muscles. Swelling may also be present in the back of the leg.

The best treatment from a hamstring strain is prevention. Always remember to warm up slowly and to stretch out well before starting any running or jumping.

Early treatment of the hamstring strain should employ the use of ice and compression with an ACE bandage or a compressive wrap. Next, pain free hamstring stretching. It goes without saying, that the athlete in the earlier states of a hamstring strain will need to restrict him/herself from any activity which aggravates. Strains which fail to heal quickly, should be evaluated by a sports-minded physician, whom is trained in the evaluation of sports injuries and who understands the biomechanics of the pelvis and is able to evaluate for strength and flexibility abnormalities. As the pain level subsides, the athlete may return to progressive activity which must include a regiment of daily hamstring stretching, progressive strengthening of the hamstring muscles, and the periodic evaluation of biomechanics to eliminate ongoing training errors or stress which would cause reoccurrence of this particular sports injury.

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