



Hamstring Muscle Strain/Tear

What is a Hamstring Muscle Strain/Tear?

An acute hamstring strain or tear is a common injury that occurs during sport and recreational activities. It is common in various sports including football, netball, hockey and track and field. Hamstring strain is where the muscle fibres of the hamstring are either overstretched or torn resulting in a degree of damage. The hamstring muscles connect from behind the knee to the base of your bottom. A hamstring muscle strain can be graded depending on its severity.

Why does it happen?

A hamstring strain can occur while sprinting or running and also when excessive stretch is being placed on the muscle group such as during gymnastics or ballet or sustained in a fall.

Some risk factors for hamstring strain include older age, previous hamstring injury, poor muscle strength, local muscle fatigue and an in-balance between quadriceps and hamstring strength. Lumbar spine (lower back) injuries or tightness can also contribute.

What will a physiotherapist do?

The physiotherapist will determine the extent of your hamstring strain, assess contributing factors and complete a biomechanical assessment. The physiotherapist will provide information in regards to the estimated time of recovery, appropriate rehabilitation methods and advice regarding RICE and no HARM principles.

The physiotherapist can employ treatments such as soft tissue therapy, dry needling, electrotherapy, ice or heat, compression garments, joint mobilisation, provide a home exercise program and advice regarding activity modification. Commencing an exercise program including hamstring range of movement, muscle strengthening and stretching is essential in the management of hamstring muscle injuries. The physiotherapist will develop an exercise program for you to complete which will involve gradual progressions before returning to sport.

What about sport?

It is important that before returning to sport a thorough rehabilitation process has been undertaken to avoid re-injury. This will involve graduated strengthening exercises throughout the rehabilitation stage. Guideline of days before return to sport with a hamstring strain is as follows;

Strain or minor muscle tear: 2-3 weeks

Medium to large tear: 4 - 8 weeks

Complete rupture: 12+ weeks

Outcome

Hamstring muscle strains usually have a good recovery if appropriate rehabilitation is undertaken. Patients may be at greater risk of re-injury secondary to scar tissue formation and inadequate recovery.