

Proper muscle strengthening is key

By Caroline Barichievich

Whether you are a water skier, paddleboarder, mountain biker, or hiker, you may engage your hip and core muscles more than you know.

Experiencing pain in your lower back, hip, knee, or foot? Perhaps it's your gluteus medius, a significant, but lesser known muscle.

The gluteus medius muscle supports humans to walk on two legs and sustain long hours of play. It is located on the side of your bum between the bony protrusion on the hip to the top of the pelvis. It's the muscle that keeps the legs from dropping in and what stabilizes the pelvis when standing on one leg. It also helps activate core muscles and maintain hip and knee alignment.

If the gluteus medius is weak and cannot control the leg from dropping in toward the other leg, this can cause pain throughout the leg. Pain can spread from the hip to the knee joint and has been linked to iliotibial (IT) band problems, tendonitis, and foot pains.

To avoid potential pains and enjoy an injury free summer, the following exercises will strengthen the gluteus medius muscles.

Wall Press: Standing with one side against a wall, lift the inside leg against the wall up 60 degrees and push for five seconds. This exercises the opposite leg by pushing the knee, hip and ankle against the wall.

Side Leg Lift: Lie on your side with the upper arm on the

floor (balance your head on extended hand) and the lower knee bent for stability. Keep the top leg straight and slightly behind you while keeping your back straight. Lift the higher leg upward approximately 30 degrees while maintaining the hip slightly back and the toes pointed forward for a count of two up and two down.

Side Plank Lift: Rise in a side plank position with your legs extended. Balance on the side of your foot and elbow, with hips lifted off the ground to achieve neutral alignment of your trunk, hips, knees, and ankles. While balancing on the elbow and feet, raise your top leg up in the air for a count of two up and two down. Maintain plank position throughout all repetitions.

Single Leg Squat: Place a chair six to twelve inches behind you. Stand on one leg and slowly squat, lowering the buttocks to touch the chair for a count of two and then extend back to standing for a count of two. During this motion, your extended leg should stay in line with your other thigh.

For every exercise, perform three sets of 10 to 15 repetitions on both sides. You should feel the muscle tighten in your bum, not on the side of your knee or front of the thigh.

If pain persists, contact your physician or a sports medicine specialist.

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