

Hip Labral Tear

What is a labral tear in the hip?

The hip labrum is a ring of cartilage that lines the rim of the hip socket, helping to deepen the joint and keep the ball of the femur stable. A labral tear occurs when this cartilage is damaged. Labral tears are extremely common — studies of young, asymptomatic adults with an average age of 26 have found tears in nearly 40% of participants, and cadaver studies have shown labral abnormalities in 93-96% of adult hips. Many labral tears cause no symptoms at all.

Common causes include normal age-related wear and tear, osteoarthritis, femoroacetabular impingement, repetitive stress from sports or activity, hip dysplasia, and trauma. Symptoms, when present, commonly include deep groin or front-of-hip pain, clicking or catching sensations, stiffness, and pain with prolonged sitting or activities involving deep hip flexion or rotation.

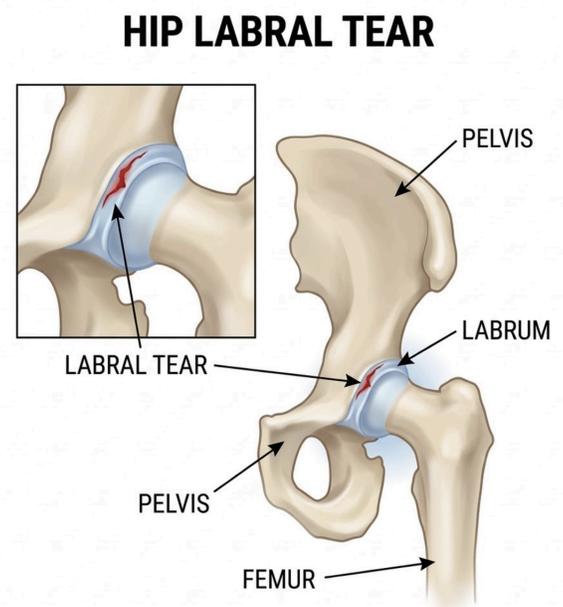
How is it treated?

Reduce activities that aggravate symptoms, particularly those involving deep squatting, pivoting, or repetitive hip flexion. Anti-inflammatory medications such as ibuprofen or naproxen can help manage pain. A rehabilitation program emphasizing hip stability, core control, and gradual strengthening is crucial to recovery. Avoid positions that combine deep hip flexion with internal rotation, as this places the most stress on the labrum. In some cases, injections or surgical intervention may be recommended if conservative treatment does not provide sufficient relief.

How long is the recovery?

Recovery time depends on the severity of the tear and whether treatment is conservative or surgical. With a structured rehabilitation program, many people see meaningful improvement within 6 to 12 weeks. However, full recovery, particularly for more significant tears, can take several months. Try to be patient.

Resuming sports or activities should be gradual and based on pain tolerance. Avoid deep squatting, pivoting, and high-impact activities until symptoms are well-managed. Begin with low-impact exercises and gradually increase intensity.



Hip Labral Tear Rehabilitation Exercises

Consistent strengthening exercises can decrease pain and improve function. Perform the following program **2-3 times per week for 6-8 weeks**. After this initial phase, continue doing these exercises just 1-2 times per week to maintain your hip health.

How to Perform Your Strengthening Exercises

Go SLOW: Perform every movement with control—take 3 seconds to lift the weight, hold for 1 second, and take 3 seconds to lower it. Moving slowly improves your muscle's ability to handle weight, leading to much better long-term strength and stability for your hip joint.

The 8-10 Progression Rule: Start with a weight you can lift for 3 sets of 8 reps (mild pain up to 4/10 is acceptable and safe). Each time you do this workout, try to add 1 repetition per set if your hip tolerates it. Once you successfully work up to 3 sets of 10 reps, increase your weight slightly and drop back down to 8 reps. By repeating this cycle, you will safely increase your weight every 1 to 2 weeks to keep building strength.

How many sets? If you are performing this program 2 times per week, complete 3 sets of each exercise. If you are performing this program 3 times per week, complete 2 sets of each exercise. Either option gives your muscles enough weekly volume to build strength — choose the schedule that fits your lifestyle.

Active Warm Up

- March in place - Alternate lifting each knee towards your chest. 15 per leg.
- Leg swings - Swing one leg forward and backward. 10 to 15 per leg.
- Butt kicks - Stand tall and kick the heel towards the glutes. 10 to 15 per leg.

Squats (with or without dumbbells)

- Objective: strengthen the quadriceps, hamstrings, glutes, and calves
- Stand shoulder width apart. Lower until your thighs are slightly above parallel to the floor. Start with a chair squat or a half squat if you have pain.
- Perform 2-3 sets of 8-10 repetitions.



Step Ups (with or without holding dumbbells)

- Objective: strengthen lower extremity muscles, improves balance and stability, addresses imbalances between legs
- Step up onto a sturdy low platform or step with your injured leg first, followed by the other leg. Then step back down, leading with the injured leg. To further challenge yourself, increase the step height or perform the exercise while holding weights.
- Perform 2-3 sets of 8-10 repetitions on each side.



Standing Hip Abduction (with resistance band around ankles)

- Objective: strengthen hip abductors in a weight-bearing position
- Stand tall holding onto a wall or sturdy surface for balance. With a resistance band looped around your ankles, slowly lift the working leg out to the side, keeping your toes pointed forward and your body upright. Lift only as far as you can while keeping your hips level, pause briefly, then slowly return to the starting position.
- Perform 2-3 sets of 8-10 repetitions on each side.



Clamshells (with or without resistance band around thigh)

- Objective: strengthen hip external rotators and pelvic stabilizers
- Lie on your side with both your hips and knees bent to about 45 degrees. Keep your feet together. Slowly raise the top knee as high as possible without letting your hips roll backward or your pelvis move. Pause briefly at the top, then slowly lower back down.
- Perform 2-3 sets of 8-10 repetitions on each side.



Glute Hip Bridge (with or without weights on lap)

- Objective: strengthen gluteus maximus, hamstrings, pelvis, torso
- Lie on your back with knees bent. Lift your hips to form a straight line from shoulders to knees, squeeze your glutes, hold briefly, then lower back down.
- Perform 2-3 sets of 8-10 repetitions.



Deadbug

- Objective: strengthen deep core muscles, improves pelvic stability and control during leg movements
- Lie on your back with your arms extended straight toward the ceiling and your knees bent to 90 degrees so your shins are parallel to the floor. Slowly extend one leg straight out, lowering it toward the floor while simultaneously reaching the opposite arm overhead. Return to the starting position. Continue repeating and alternating sides.
- Perform 2 sets of 1 minute.



How to Perform Your Stretching Exercises

Listen to your body. If your range of motion is limited, move only as far as comfortable. Do not force any position that causes sharp pain. A stretch should feel like a gentle pull, never sharp pain. If a position is uncomfortable, use a towel for reach or perform a smaller version of the movement—consistency is more important than depth.

Standing Quadriceps Stretch

- Objective: increase mobility of the quadriceps muscle
- Stand on the unaffected leg. Bend your knee bringing your heel towards the glutes. Grasp the ankle with your hand. You should feel a stretch along your thigh muscle.
- Hold this for 30 seconds, repeat on the other side.



Sitting Hamstring Stretch

- Objective: improve flexibility of the hamstrings
- Straighten out the affected leg and bend your other leg inwards. Hinge forward at the hips and reach towards the toes. Keep the leg straight.
- Hold this for 30 seconds, repeat on the other side.



Lying Figure 4 Stretch

- Objective: stretch the piriformis and gluteal muscles
- While lying on your back, lift one foot and put the ankle over your other thigh, just above the knee, forming a figure 4 shape with your legs. Clasp your hands behind your thigh and gently pull it toward your chest. You should feel a stretch in your hip and in the glutes.
- Hold this for 30 seconds, repeat on the other side.



Half Kneeling Hip Flexor Stretch

- Objective: improve flexibility of the hip flexor muscles, reduces anterior hip stress
- Kneel on the affected side with your other foot forward and flat on the floor, both knees at about 90 degrees. Keeping your torso upright, gently shift your weight forward until you feel a stretch in the front of your hip and upper thigh on the kneeling side. Do not arch your lower back.
- Hold this for 30 seconds, repeat on the other side.

