

Greater trochanteric pain syndrome

Your clinician has diagnosed you with greater trochanteric pain syndrome (GTPS). This leaflet provides information on what GTPS is and how it can be managed. If you have any questions, please speak to a physiotherapist caring for you.

What is GTPS?

GTPS is a painful condition affecting the outer thigh and hip area. It occurs when the tissues that lie over the bony prominence (the greater trochanter) at the top of the thigh bone become irritated. These can include tendons, muscles or bursae (fluid-filled sacs that help smooth movement between muscles, tendons and the hip bone).

This irritation may have occurred for a number of reasons, but it is most often due to overload – the structures are unable to cope with the strain applied to them.

What are the symptoms of GTPS?

- Pain in your outer thigh and hip area. This may feel like an aching or burning pain.
- The pain may be more intense when you are lying on your side, especially at night.
- It may become worse with exercise and you may find you walk with a limp.

GTPS is diagnosed in clinic through taking a history and doing specific tests of the hip. Usually, scans are not required to diagnose this problem.

What causes GTPS?

It is most common in middle aged females. The exact causes of GTPS are not fully understood, but there are many factors that can contribute to it, including:

- direct fall on outside edge of hip
- excessive load, for example prolonged walking or running. Poor running style can also lead to increased load on this area of the hip.
- prolonged or excessive pressure to your hip area (for example, sitting in bucket car seats, or sleeping on your affected side, may aggravate the problem)
- weakness of the muscles surrounding the hip, called the gluteus medius and minimus.

How is GTPS managed?

To improve symptoms in the short term, you can try the following:

- Decrease aggravating activities, such as running or excessive walking.
- When you are standing still, avoid leaning on one hip and keep your weight evenly through both feet.
- Avoid sleeping on the aggravated side. If sleeping on the opposite hip, try placing a pillow between your knees to stop your painful leg crossing over.
- Avoid sitting with your legs crossed.
- Losing weight.
- Pain killers may be used to provide short term pain relief.

As GTPS is most often related to hip structures not coping with heavy/frequent load, exercises to strengthen this area will help healing and returning to normal activity.

Below are exercises to do in the early and later stages of your rehabilitation. Your physiotherapist may identify other specific exercises for you to complete. You should follow the instructions and monitor your performance of these carefully. Load is needed to aid recovery but overload may worsen your pain.

Exercises for early stages



Stand, holding on to a stable surface, such as a chair or table, for balance. Lift your painful leg out to the side and then slowly lower back to normal standing position. Aim to complete three sets of 10-12 repetitions.



Stand with your painful leg away from the wall. Lift your unaffected leg up to 90 degrees, as shown in the photo. Push against the wall with your knee. You should feel the muscles around the edge of your outside hip working. Hold this position for 20-30 seconds. Repeat three times.



Lie on your unaffected side with a pillow between your knees, as shown in the photo. Make sure your top leg is in line with your body. Lift the leg up towards the ceiling and slowly lower back to the starting position. Complete three sets of 10-12 repetitions.

Exercises for later stages



Lie with your painful leg towards the floor, with your knees bent behind you.. Push up on your elbow, lifting your hips up so they are in line with your body as shown in photo A. Hold for 20-30 seconds. Repeat three times.



To make this exercise more challenging you can complete with your knees straight, as in photo B.



With a resistance band around your ankles, stand in a mini squat position. Take 10 slow and controlled steps to the left and then repeat to the right. Ensure you stay in a squat position. Repeat three times.



Without using the handrail, step up and then slowly down from the bottom step of the stairs with your painful leg. Complete three sets of 10-12 repetitions.

How long does it take to get better?

Everybody will improve differently, but for most people it will take six to nine months of focused rehabilitation to make a return to full normal activities without pain. It is normal to have periods of increased pain or flare ups during this time. If this happens, you may need to reduce your exercises until the pain returns to previous levels.

If symptoms don't improve within six to nine months, even when you have been completing appropriate exercise programme, other treatment options, such as an injections, may be considered. These are not suitable for all patients and so should be discussed with a medical professional where appropriate.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns please contact the Physiotherapy department,
t: 020 7188 5094, Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 5.00pm

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline. **t:** 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk
t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch. **t:** 020 7188 8815 **e:** languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day. **t:** 111

NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health. **w:** www.nhs.uk

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t: 0800 731 0319 **e:** members@gstt.nhs.uk **w:** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership



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