

Notes: None of the exercises should cause you pain during or afterwards. Remember - don't try and do all the strength exercises. Choose one that works for you. Please consult your healthcare professional before doing any of these exercises as they may not be right for you. You can also consult me via Skype for an online diagnosis of any injuries and bespoke treatment programmes.

1- Hip flexor/ Quad stretch



Starting position: Half kneel with your one knee on a pillow and your other leg out in front of you. Hold on to something for balance if needed.

Movement: A. Push your hip forward, but at the same time tilt your pelvis backwards. This is important - if you allow your pelvis to tilt forward, the stretch will not be as effective. This will mainly stretch the iliopsoas muscle, but if you're very tight you may have to spend time on this part first and then add in part B.

B. Once you can easily achieve part A, maintain that position and grab hold of your foot. You may have to loop a belt or towel around your foot if you are very stiff.

Check that: Your pelvis remains tilted backwards throughout the stretch. Remember, strong sustained stretches switches muscles off, so these should be followed by dynamic movements if you're doing them shortly before doing sport.

Aim: Hold the stretch for 30sec and repeat 3 times on each leg.

2- Glute stretch



Starting position: Supine with both knees bent up.

Movement: Place the outside of your left ankle just above your right knee. Take hold of your right thigh with both your hands and pull it towards your chest. You should have a pillow under your head if you struggle to keep your neck in a good position. You should feel the stretch in the left buttock/thigh/back depending on which part is the tightest.

Aim: Hold the glute stretch for 30 seconds and repeat on the opposite side. Repeat 3 times.

3- Piriformis stretch



Starting Position: Supine with both knees bent up.

Movement: Cross your right leg over your left leg. Place your right hand on your right knee and your left hand on your shin. Pull with both hands at the same time so that your knee moves diagonally towards your left shoulder. You should feel a stretch in your right buttock.

Check that: You also pull with the hand that is on the shin – this twists the hip and increases the stretch. Make sure your knee moves across your body.

Aim: Hold the glute stretch for 30 seconds and repeat on the opposite side. Repeat 3 times.

4- Hamstring stretch



Purpose: To improve hamstring flexibility

Starting position: Sit on the floor with one leg extended in front and with the other foot resting on your inner upper thigh. If your hamstrings are very tight, you may find that sitting on a pillow that lifts you up a bit helps.

Movement: Slide your hands down your leg. You will likely not be able to reach your foot and that is OK. Just go to the point where you can still **KEEP YOUR KNEE STRAIGHT**. It should be a gentle stretch. Your body should be aligned nicely with the leg straight forward and the hips and shoulders squared.

Check that: You do not force the movement and that your knee stays straight.

Aim: Hold the stretch for 30 seconds and repeat on the opposite side. Repeat 3 times

5- Single leg deadlift



Why I like it: It's not only a very good exercise that strengthens the hamstrings and glutes, but it also helps to develop your balance and position sense. So you're getting a very good return for your effort!

Starting position: Balance on one leg with your knee slightly bent.

Movement: Tighten your stomach muscles and slowly hinge forward from your hips and lift your other leg straight out to the back. Your back should NOT bend. Try to get your body and hind leg in a straight line.

Check that: Your supporting knee stays slightly bent.

Aim: Hold the position for 10 seconds. Build up to repeating 10 times on each leg. You can progress this exercise by holding a weight in your hands.

6- Double Leg Bridge



This exercise is similar to the bridge that we used in the previous article to strengthen the glutes, but you can target your hamstrings by moving bottom further away from the chair.

Starting position: Lie on your back with your heels on a chair. Make sure that your bottom is far enough away from the chair so that your knees are bent at about 15 degrees when you reach the top. The straighter your knees, the more it becomes a hamstring exercise and that's our goal for now. If, however, you find that your hamstrings want to cramp, you may have to move your bottom closer to the chair to start with.

Movement: Activate your pelvic floor and deep abdominals by squeezing as if you don't want to wee or fart. Keep them activated and lift your bottom into the air so that your body forms a straight line. Once at the top, you should squeeze your buttocks and make sure that you don't feel any strain in your lower back. If you do feel strain in your lower back, make sure that you are squeezing your stomach and glutes and not trying to just arch your back.

Check that: You don't feel any strain in your lower back. If your hamstrings cramp, move your bottom closer to the chair.

Aim: Hold the position for 10sec. Rest 10 sec. Repeat 10 times. Build up to 4 reps of 30sec holds.

7- Progress to: Single leg bridge



MOVE YOUR BOTTOM FURTHER AWAY FROM THE CHAIR

Starting position: Lie on your back and place one heel on the top of a chair and keep the other foot in the air.

Movement: With the knee resting on the chair slightly bent, lift your bottom off the floor until your body forms a straight line. Tighten up your stomach muscles and your glutes. Your pelvis must stay in a straight line. Do not allow the one side to drop to the floor. Then slowly lower yourself back down.

Check that: You do not put too much pressure on your neck and that you do not over-extend your back by trying to lift your hips too high. It may be an indication that you are forcing the movement too much if your back hurts afterwards. If you find that your hamstrings cramp - shift your bottom closer to your feet.

Aim: Build up to 3 sets of 15 reps on each leg

8- Progress to: Double leg ball curl



Starting position: Lie on your back with your heels on a big ball and knees bent to 90 degrees.

Movement: Lift your bottom off the floor so that your body forms a straight line. Engage your stomach muscles and squeeze your glutes. Now slowly roll the ball away from your body by straightening your legs out. Then slowly roll the ball back towards your bottom.

Check that: Your bottom stays at the same level in the air.

Aim: Build up to 3 sets of 15 reps. Rest 1minute between sets.