

MUSCLE IN FOCUS ADDUCTOR LONGUS

Once spring arrives and speed sessions start to appear in your training, the adductor longus tends to make itself known, giving you a tight and sore groin.

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THE adductor longus is the main visual muscle that you will see in your groin region. It attaches to the pubic bone and traverses inferiorly towards the mid shaft of the femur (upper leg bone). As the name suggests, its main action is to adduct the thigh (move the leg towards your midline), but it also medially rotates it (turns your leg inwards).

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Most distance runners would be familiar with this muscle around spring time when you start to come off your long, slow winter miles and get into some quicker speed work. Many runners will pull up a little sore initially (Delayed Onset Muscle Soreness or DOMS) from this change in pace and the adductor longus is likely to be one of the tight spots. The reason for this muscle becoming sore is not completely obvious. Unlike your calves, which can take a greater load when hitting the ground at higher speeds, the stabilization activity of this muscle during quicker running is increased and leads to DOMS – but if this was the case, you would think your gluteus medius (hip stabiliser on the other side of the hip joint) is also likely to pull up sore. The other mechanism involved in quicker running that may cause this muscular soreness is through increased stride length. Lengthening in stride causes your adductor longus to go through a greater range of motion in an eccentric contraction with regard to your trail leg. In layman's terms, when running quicker, the leg behind you is put under more stress or load.

What to do about DOMS

Immediately after a session do all those things that you have been taught - a good cool down followed by a light, static stretch, hot and cold shower (or cold pool if available) with fluid and nutrient replacement. Massage, or self massage, directly after a quick session will not make a difference to the onset of DOMS. Once DOMS has occurred, usually 24 – 48 hrs later, heat followed by a vigorous, non-oily self massage of the adductor longus will lessen the symptoms and increase your amount of pain free range of motion. Self massage of the adductor longus involves grabbing hold of and shaking it, followed by superficial frictioning (rubbing of the skin). Static stretching at this stage will rarely help and can even increase the symptoms. Light, dynamic stretching (gentle swinging of the leg) after heat and massage has been shown to help considerably.



Performing self massage on the adductor longus

Other problems

The adductor longus can be torn. Many runners would have felt that awful 'twang' feeling when attempting to accelerate or tripping on a stick while running trails. If you feel this occur, go and see someone. DON'T stretch this muscle when torn, it will make it worse. In comparison to their neighbours, the adductors have poor blood supply and as a result they tend to heal slowly. It is important that you seek further medical treatment and advice for what is appropriate for the few weeks following injury.

The adductor longus may also become sore without reason. This is a typical sign that your pelvis is out of alignment and you need to see someone to have a look at it. For those who get regular soft tissue work, ask your therapist to check your pelvis alignment each week – sore or not. They can easily make changes and prevent the pain coming on.

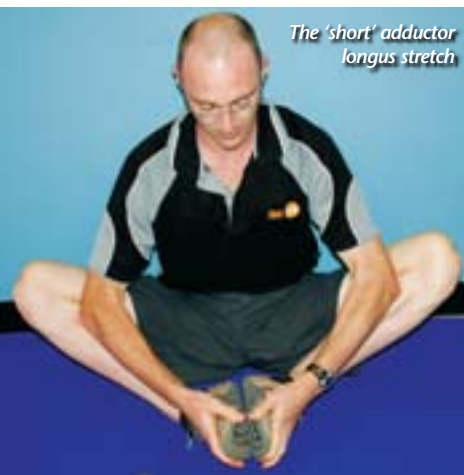
Although stretching this muscle when injured is not a great idea, light stretches when healthy will keep it mobile. Being a muscle that does not reach beyond your knee, you can do a 'short adductor' stretch. This is done in a seated position with both heels to your groin and then gently pushing out with your elbows. An alternative stretch is to lunge. The adductor longus you are stretching is the back leg. As you get into a full lunge you will notice it

beginning to stretch. When DOMS is apparent, your range of motion will be restricted and the stretch will come on much earlier.

Self massage to this area should be slow and gradual. Quick sliding techniques will often irritate the adductor longus. Seated with one leg bent at the hip and knee (see photo), gradually run your thumbs or fingers along the adductor longus, stopping at the sore bits and waiting for this sensation to subside. With any luck it will clear up within a few days.

Happy running!

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The 'short' adductor longus stretch



The 'lunging' adductor longus stretch