

THREE EFFECTIVE EXERCISES FOR HOCKEY HIPS.

All athletes are at their best when their bodies are healthy, strong, flexible and balanced. However, an athlete can unknowingly put excessive strain on different parts of their body when practicing or playing their sport. For example, two of the most typical problems faced by hockey players are overly tight hip flexors and weak (or non-firing) gluteal muscles. If not addressed, these conditions can negatively impact a player's performance and can lead to lower back and groin injuries. Therefore, it is important that hockey players are aware of these naturally occurring, common problems in the body and take steps to correct them.

To avoid the problems of overly tight hip flexors and weak (or non-firing) gluteal muscles, a hockey player can do three preventative and therapeutic exercises regularly. These exercises are designed to relax the hip flexors, strengthen and increase the ability to activate the gluteal muscles, and in turn reduce the amount of strain on the lower back and groin regions. Additional benefits include promoting strength and speed, longevity in the sport and improved overall performance.

Three effective exercises for hockey players:

1. Front Hip Flexor Stretch:

- Begin in a forward lunge position and drop your back knee to the floor.
- Raise your arms and hands up over your head and look up.
- Press your hips forward and down toward the floor. Feel a stretch through your torso, hip, groin and thigh.
- Hold the stretch for about 30-45 seconds, release and repeat on the other leg.
- You can modify this stretch based upon your own flexibility and limitations, but be sure to keep your forward knee over or behind your ankle — not in front of it.



2. Glute Bridge

- Lay on your back with your hands by your sides, your knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Make sure your feet are under your knees.
- Tighten your abdominal and buttock muscles.
- Raise your hips up to create a straight line from your knees to your shoulders.
- Squeeze your core and try to pull your belly button back toward your spine.
- The goal is to maintain a straight line from your shoulders to your knees.
- Perform 8-12 reps holding the top position for 3-6 seconds.
- If your hips sag or drop, lower yourself back on the floor.
- Be sure to contract the glutes hard and keep the hamstrings relaxed. You may need to place your hand on your glutes to help activate them.
- Your glutes should be doing the majority of the work, and the hamstrings are allowed to do a minor amount of the work, but you should not feel any strain in the lower back.
- If you do feel strain in the lower back, immediately lower your torso to the starting position and refocus on contracting your glutes. If the pain persists, stop the exercise.



3. Modified Side Plank

- Lie on your left side and bend your knees 90 degrees. Prop your upper body up on your left elbow and forearm.

- Brace your core by contracting your abs forcefully as if you were about to be punched in the gut.
- Thrust your hips forward until your body forms a straight line from your knees to your shoulder.
- Breathe deeply for the duration of the exercise.
- Perform 8-12 reps holding the top position for 3-6 seconds.



Make It Easier: If you can't hold the stretches for 30 seconds, hold for 5 to 10 seconds, rest for 5 seconds, and repeat as many times as needed to total 30 seconds. Each time you perform the exercise, try to hold each repetition a little longer, so that you reach your 30-second goal with fewer repetitions.

Please note: The suggestions in this article are intended for healthy and active individuals. If you experience pain from any of these exercises, consult a qualified healthcare practitioner.