

# HIPS & HIP FLEXORS – FOR RIDERS

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Your hip flexors are muscles in your body that control many movements. They flex the hip, and ultimately lift the thigh. They are involved in a lot of stabilizing movements, but also some larger and stronger movements such as kicking. The hip flexors consist of two muscles, the psoas and the iliacus. Both muscles attach to the femur, although the psoas attaches to the lower back, and the iliacus attaches to the hip bone.

For riders, the hips would be the number one area you should want to address. Over time, riding will cause a decrease in hip flexibility due to the constant closed position while sitting in the saddle. Regular stretching of the hips will not only lengthen the muscles, but will also decrease the chance of injury.

## How Your Hips Get Tight

Most of us spend a lot of time sitting - whether it's riding, sitting at the dinner table, commuting or working at a desk (this is the major culprit!). The fact is that we all need to work, and no matter how often we get up and move around, the majority of the day is still spent sitting down. If you are in a sitting position for most of the day, then your psoas and iliacus are also in a bent position for most of the day. As they attach to the top of your leg, and your lower back, they will be in this shortened position for as long as you are sitting down. They can become very tight when they stay like this for a long time, as they are not very pliable muscles. Once they get tight, even if you stand up, you need to do extra stretch and exercises to make sure that they get loose again.

## How It Affects Your Body

If you have tight hip flexors, then it is likely that you might have experienced back pain at some point in time. You can think of the anatomy as to why this is. As mentioned before, the psoas attaches to your lower back. If your hips are tight then your psoas may pull your back and hip forward and put you into lordosis (a curve in your lower back). This puts a lot of strain onto the back that can turn into a serious injury. It is often a cause of back pain.

*~ from healthkicker.com*

## What Can I Do About Tight Hip Flexors?

Below are a few hip and hamstring stretches. If you have ever felt low back or knee pain, then these are the stretches for you! After riding, try to hold each stretch for 30 seconds, and repeat 2-3 times per leg. You can complete the stretches 3-4 times per week.

### Piriformis Stretch



#### Description:

- Lay on your back, knees bent, feet flat.
- Cross your right ankle over your left knee.
- Pull your left knee up towards your opposite shoulder; stop at the midline.
- Allow your right knee to fall out, causing a greater rotation at the hip, therefore a bigger stretch.

## Hip Flexor Stretch



### Description:

- kneeling (ideally on a soft surface or a pillow) in a modified lunge position.
- activate abdominals and tuck your tailbone slightly.
- press hip forward to feel a stretch in the front of your hip.
- side bend away from the stretch side.

## Standing Hamstring Stretch



### Description:

- standing upright with one foot up on a foot-stool or bench (hip flexed up to 90 degrees).
- maintaining a neutral spine, flex the pelvis forward to feel a stretch in the proximal (upper) part of the hamstrings.
- to increase the stretch to the hamstring, start with the foot further away by straightening the knee somewhat.

**NOTE:** if any pain or discomfort is felt in the front of the hip during this stretch, do not push through.

~ from physiohub.com ■