

Thigh Injury – Pulled Quadriceps (Front Thigh Muscle)



Information for people in our care.

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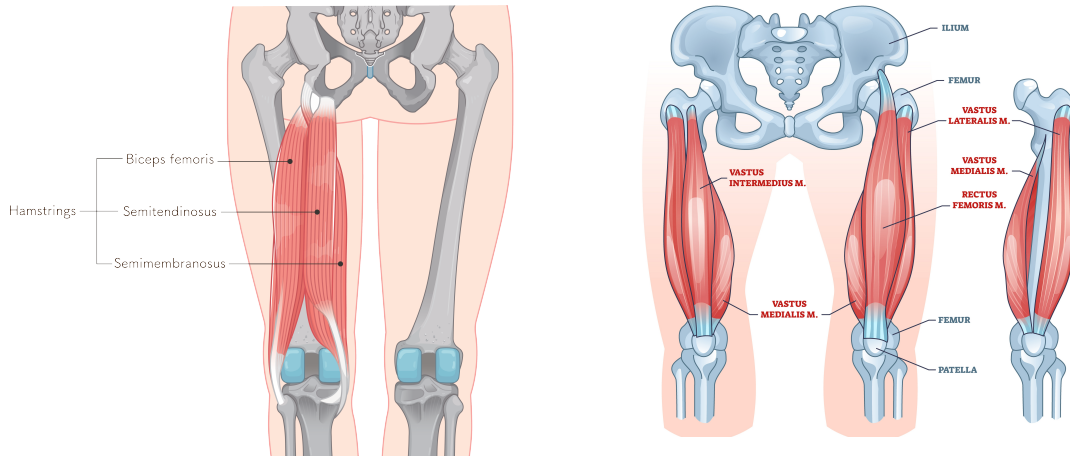
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What is it?

The thigh has two main muscle groups:

- Quadriceps (front of thigh).
- Hamstrings (back of thigh).



A pulled quad means one of the muscles at the front of your thigh has been strained or torn.

How does it happen?

This injury often happens during activities such as:

- Sprinting.
- Jumping.
- Kicking.
- Lifting weights.

It occurs when the muscle contracts forcefully and overstretches.

What does it feel like?

You may notice:

- Pain at the front of your thigh.
- A “tearing” feeling at the time of injury.
- Tightness after activity.

Other symptoms can include:

- Muscle spasms.
- Weakness.
- Swelling.
- Reduced movement.

What should I do?

The first **24–48 hours** are important:

Pain relief

- Take painkillers (e.g. paracetamol or ibuprofen) if suitable for you.
- Follow the instructions and check with a pharmacist if unsure.

Rest

- Reduce activity for the first two days.
- Avoid running or strenuous exercise.

Ice

- Use a cold pack (wrapped in a towel) for up to 20 minutes.
- Every two hours for the first three days.
- Then three times a day until swelling reduces.
- Do not put ice directly on your skin.

Move gently

- Try to walk normally if you can.
- Gentle movement helps recovery.

Elevation

- Keep your leg raised above hip level when resting (first two days)

What should I avoid?

For the first few days, avoid anything that increases blood flow to the muscle:

- Hot showers or heat packs.
- Stretching too early.

- Massage or sports massage.
- Alcohol.
- Too much activity.

These can increase swelling and delay healing.

Recovery and treatment

- Most injuries heal in a few weeks to a couple of months.
- A physiotherapist can assess your injury and guide recovery.
- Treatment may include:
 - Exercises.
 - Hands-on therapy.
 - Advice on activity.

Exercises

Only do exercises that are pain-free. If it hurts, stop.

Early stage (first few days).

1. Knee movement (range of motion).

- Bend and straighten your knee gently.
- Do this sitting, standing, or lying down.
- Stay within a comfortable range.
- **10 repetitions, at least three times a day.**

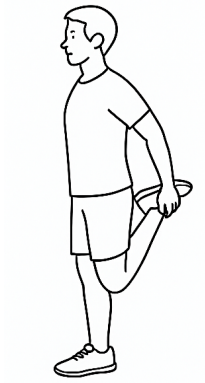


Around Day 5 (if pain is improving)

Stretching exercises (pain-free only)

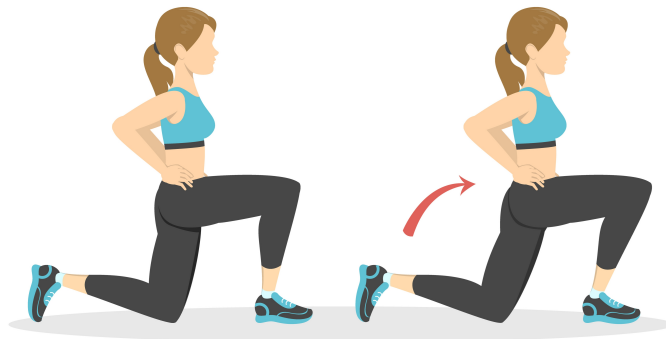
2. Quadriceps stretch

- Bring your heel towards your bottom.
- You should feel a gentle stretch in the front of your thigh.
- To increase stretch, tuck your hips under slightly.
- **Hold 20–30 seconds, repeat three times, three times daily.**



3. Hip flexor stretch

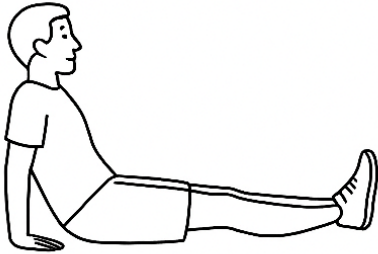
- Kneel on one knee, other foot in front.
- Push your hips forward.
- Keep your back upright.
- You should feel a stretch at the front of your hip and thigh.
- **Hold 20–30 seconds, repeat three times, three times daily.**



Strengthening exercises

4. Static quadriceps contractions

- Tighten your thigh muscle without moving your leg.
- Can be done sitting or standing.
- **Hold 10 seconds, rest five seconds.**
- **Repeat 10 times (build up to two to three sets).**



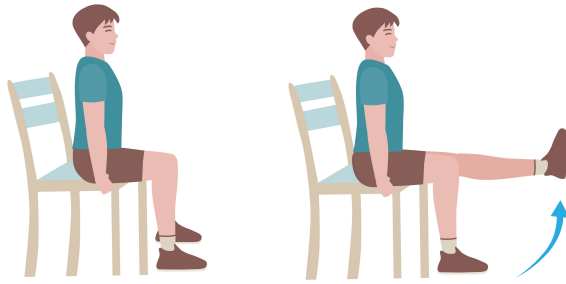
5. Straight leg raise

- Keep your leg straight and lift it off the floor.
- Hold for three to five seconds.
- Slowly lower it down.
- **Repeat 10–20 times daily.**



6. Knee extensions

- Straighten your knee slowly, then lower.
- Use no weight at first.
- You can add resistance later.
- **Start with two sets of 10, build to three sets of 15.**



Later stage (as strength improves)

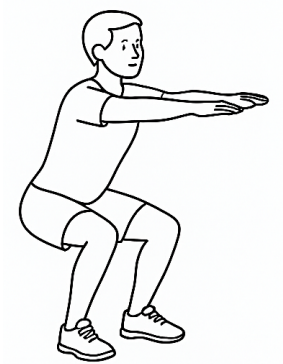
7. Lunges

- Step forward into a wide stance.
- Lower your back knee toward the floor.
- Keep your back upright.
- Do not let your front knee go past your toes.
- **Two sets of 10. Build to three sets of 15.**



8. Squats

- Bend your knees (no more than 90°).
- Keep knees behind your toes.
- Start with supported or small squats, then progress.
- **Two sets of 10. Build to three sets of 15.**



Returning to normal activity

- Build up activity gradually.
- Return to work or sport when:
 - Pain has improved.
 - Movement and strength have returned.

If your job involves standing, you may need:

- Lighter duties.
- Breaks to rest your leg.

Driving

You can drive when you can:

- Safely control the car.
- Perform an emergency stop.

Check with your insurance company.

Work

- You can self-certify sickness for up to seven days.
- If you need longer, contact your GP.

When to seek help

Get medical advice if:

- Pain is not improving.

- You have tingling or numbness in the leg.
- You notice swelling and redness in the leg (possible clot).
- You develop chest pain.

Physiotherapy

If you need help with recovery, you can see a physiotherapist or refer yourself if available locally. Contact your GP.

Other formats

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We can help with larger print, audio (a message to listen to), Easy read, British Sign Language or this information in another language.



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