

Tight Hips and Shrinking Muscles: Sitting in a Heap of Trouble



We are a country of workaholic couch potatoes. No matter how good our intentions, the sad fact is that many of us work 9-to-5 office jobs, sitting in a chair (and often sitting with terrible posture), hunched over a computer for the majority of the day. In addition to those myriad problems related to this type of sedentary lifestyle, now we can add tight hip flexors to the list.

The hip flexors are the muscles in the front of your hip that pull your thigh upward, or “flex” your hip. **When you sit for long periods of time, these muscles become contracted or shortened—and the longer they stay in this position, the more they want to stay there.** Thus, your hip flexors become stubborn about returning to their correct length, resulting in a chronic case of hyperactive, shortened muscles.

Muscles work in pairs. They function better when each one of the pair maintains a similar length and strength. When your hip flexors start getting shorter and working harder, the muscles opposite them become longer and less active. The longer this goes on, the worse the problems become—in other words, your tight hip flexors basically start “shutting down your opposing muscles.”

It is important to correct this muscle imbalance before it becomes what the body perceives as normal. The best way to combat tight hip flexors is through a physical therapy program that teaches you proper sitting posture, stretching exercises for your tight flexors and ways of strengthening the corresponding weakened, “shut-down” muscles.

There is not much most of us can do about the sedentary nature of our jobs. But with proper stretching, strengthening and awareness, we can at least prevent our hip flexors from creating additional problems for other muscle groups.