HEALTH • WELLNESS • FITNESS
RICKOLDERMAN

Fixing Hip & Knee Pain

Hip and knee pain are often considered a rite of passage when we grow older or from remaining active. You may have developed arthritic hips or knees, suffer groin pain, bursitis, or seemingly untreatable knee pain. Quite often people are told that when the pain gets to be too much, joint replacement surgery is the only viable alternative. In the case of severe arthritic changes, this usually is the only alternative. But, aside from that, most of these issues *are* treatable. Why then do you have pain in spite of all the health care professionals you've seen?

Regardless of whether you're a professional athlete or a couch potato, hip or knee pain results from excessive stress to the bony or soft tissues in those areas. In the case of hip pain, often the head of the leg bone (femur) does not move well in the hip socket (Figure 1). This stresses the cartilage and soft tissues surrounding the socket. These tissues then develop arthritic changes or other types of inflammation such as tendonitis or bursitis.

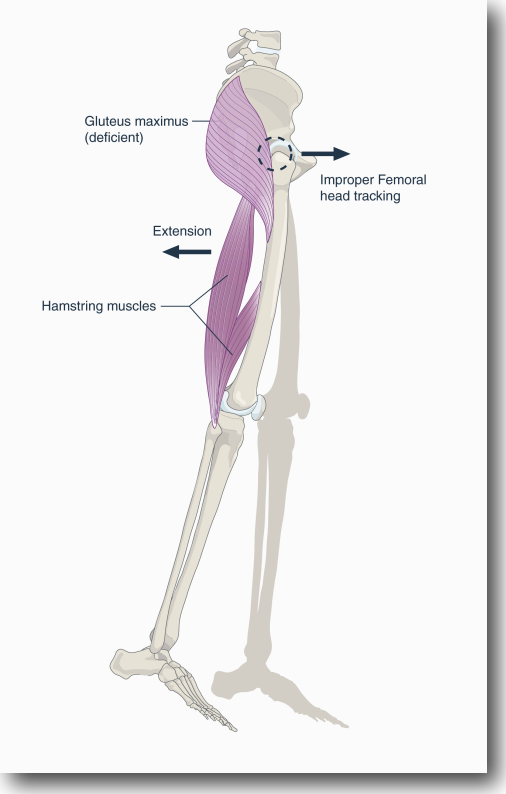

Figure 1

But why do these problems occur? Tracking problems are often the result of poor muscle performance of key pelvic muscles. These muscles then affect the mechanics of the hip joint creating a cycle of pain. Our standing and walking mechanics are two of the primary reasons these muscles become weak or inactive.

These activities are supposed to recruit the key pelvic muscles that control the femoral head in the hip socket. Unfortunately, poor habits help turn these muscles off. When these important tracking muscles turn off, excessive stress is placed on the load-bearing joints and soft tissues of the hips and knees.

The Knee Joint

When considering the knee joint, it's important to understand that this joint not only bends and straightens but also rotates. This is driven by the shape of the joint which

dictates that it must rotate while bending and straightening (Figure 2). Rotation turns out to be the biggest factor in creating knee pain. But there are precious few muscles in the knee joint that control rotation.

So if rotation causes knee pain and there aren't any muscles to control rotation in the knee then how do we fix knee pain? Well if you remember, there are muscles in the pelvis that control the tracking of the hip joint. These same muscles control rotation of the leg bone which is one half of the knee joint.

The other half (the lower leg bone) is controlled by the foot. So we then need to think about how our walking habits may be affecting the knees and hips.

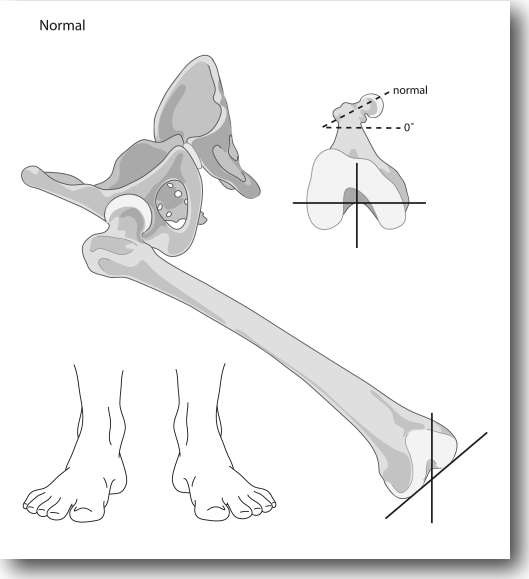

Figure 2

The knee joint is basically caught in the middle of these two giants (the pelvis and the foot). It may be reacting to one or the other or both.

Let's look at your standing and walking habits for a moment. Do you often lock one or both knees when standing? Do you walk while locking your knees? Have you noticed you weight bear on one leg more than the other? When any of these things happen you are turning off key muscles that control the hip and knee joints. Essentially the joints are hung out to dry with no help from the muscles that surround them.

Correcting standing and walking strategies goes a long way to eliminating stubborn hip and knee pain. Once the mechanics are corrected, muscles will engage that control these joints. This will decrease pain and degradation of your joints.

These issues are highlighted in my book, *Fixing You: Hip & Knee Pain* (www.FixingYou.net).

You can also reach me at (303) 477-4212 or email Rick@RickOlderman.com if you'd like an appointment or to ask a question.