

Knee pain? Your hips may be the culprit

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Are you having trouble with your knees? Do you have pain while going up or down stairs, running, or even walking? If you can't think of what could have caused your discomfort, why don't you take a moment to consider your hips? The hips can give us valuable information if they are evaluated appropriately.

Going to the hips for answers actually makes a lot of sense when you consider the fact that twenty-three muscles attach to and control the long thigh bone (femur) while only *two* muscles attach to and assist in controlling the patella. When more muscles are working together and trying to get along with one another, there is more potential for disagreement.

There has been research conducted which suggests that, especially within the female populations, patella-femoral pain syndrome (PFPS) may be a product of functional hip weakness. More specifically, the muscles in charge of stabilizing the hip and leg while performing activities on our feet. Maybe this is why, amongst other research, at least two studies in the August 2011 issue of the Journal of Orthopedic and Sports Physical Therapy found that specific hip strengthening versus specific quadriceps (knee) strengthening for women with PFPS showed a greater reduction in pain while showing improved ability to perform functional activities such as stair climbing, lunging, and squatting. In other words, focusing on hip strengthening for women with PFPS was more effective in reducing their pain and improving their physical ability than knee strengthening.

If you are having knee pain and aren't sure why, have a physical therapist take a look. A physical therapist can perform tests to assess your knee pain and interrogate your hips to see who the culprit is; and they can give you instruction on how to rid yourself of that pain, and how to avoid future problems. Free up your knees by letting your hips do the walking!

Keywords: physical therapy, knee, hip, pain, hip weakness, strengthening, evaluation

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