

Relief from Hip Pain

Hip pain can be a real pain in the butt! Understanding the cause of your hip pain will help you determine the best treatment for you. There are non-surgical solutions to hip pain, even for degenerative osteoarthritis of the hip.

Osteoarthritis:

Osteoarthritis is basically wear and tear in the ball and socket joint. The “ball” is the head of the femur (upper leg bone) and the socket is the acetabulum- a part of the pelvis. It is important to differentiate true hip pain from other types of pain in the hip region. True hip pain is usually felt towards the front, in the groin region. It may radiate down the front of the thigh. The most effective non-surgical therapy for hip arthritis is low level laser therapy. It is a painless technique proven to significantly reduce the signs and symptoms of arthritis. I have used laser light therapy for 3 years in my naturopathic practice and have had many patients with hip arthritis regain mobility and reduce pain dramatically.

Greater Trochanteric Bursitis:

Pain felt on the lateral part of the hip (side of the hip) is usually due to greater trochanteric bursitis. It is aggravated by walking, lying down on the affected side, and crossing the leg of the affected side. It can be painful to press on the boney part of the side of the hip. This is the most common cause of hip pain that I see in clinical practice. I use state of the art laser light therapy to relieve this condition. In most cases, 8 to 10 forty minute treatments alleviates the problem and patients can regain mobility and enjoy a good night sleep again. There are other bursas in the hip area that can create acute pain, often in the front groin area. Laser therapy reduces inflammation and pain in any bursitis.

Sacroiliac joint dysfunction:

The Sacroiliac joints are located at the very bottom of the back. There is one on either side of the spine. The Sacroiliac joints help make up the rear part of the pelvic girdle and sit between the sacrum and the Ilii (hip bones). These joints provide subtle movement in the pelvic girdle when walking. They can become malaligned, too mobile or too fixed resulting in problems with surrounding structures such as ligaments and muscles. Therefore, sacroiliac joint problems can cause a wide range of symptoms throughout the lower back and buttocks, or even into the thigh or groin.

Classic symptoms are:

- Difficulty turning over in bed
- Struggling to put on shoes and socks
- Pain getting your legs in and out of the car
- Stiffness in the lower back when getting up after sitting for long periods and when getting up from bed in the morning
- Aching on one side of your lower back when driving long distances
- There may be tenderness on palpating the large ligaments which surround the joint and hold it together.

There are many approaches to relieving sacroiliac joint problems, such as chiropractic adjustments and other manual techniques to re-align the joint. Laser therapy effectively targets the ligaments that are strained in the joint, quickly reducing pain. By strengthening the ligaments that provide the joint structure, laser therapy often creates more long term results than other therapies in my experience.

Piriformis syndrome:

The piriformis muscle runs across the buttock from the edge of the sacrum to the top of the femur, specifically at the greater trochanter. If this muscle is tight, it can aggravate both trochanteric bursitis and sacroiliac joint problems. It is also one possible cause of sciatic nerve pain that can run down the leg. The sciatic nerve runs through the belly of the piriformis muscle, so if the muscle is tight, the nerve can become irritated.

Treatments can include stretches that target the muscle, massage for the area, and laser light therapy. Laser light therapy increases circulation to the muscle, triples the energy output of muscle cells (ATP), causes nutrients to flood the cells, increases collagen synthesis and ultimately speeds the healing process and results in rapid resolution of muscle and ligament problems.

Referred pain from the nerves in the spine:

Pain felt in the buttock is often referred from the low back. Degeneration of the spinal vertebrae can result in narrowed channels for the nerves that exit the spine (spinal stenosis). Nerves can become pinched and pain can be felt both in the spine and down the buttocks and legs (as in sciatica). Degenerated or protruding discs can also cause pressure on the nerves that affect the hip area.

In my experience only about 5% of patients truly require surgery for such problems. Laser light therapy has been shown to significantly reduce pain from disc disease in over 90% of patients in a Canadian clinical trial. Spinal stenosis also responds very well to this treatment that is used in physiotherapy clinics across Canada. I use a state of the art laser light therapy machine called Meditech Bioflex. It is unique in that it has large treatment pads that can efficiently cover larger areas of the hips and back. Back and hip joint treatments typically last 70 minutes. Approximately 2/3 of the treatment time is the application of the treatment pads, and 1/3 is the use of a high powered laser probe.

So don't suffer with hip and back pain. When I assess a patient with hip pain, a detailed physical examination and medical history are critical in determining what the root of the problem is. Then, with targeted, effective treatments, relief can often be had without drugs or surgery. Don't wait until it's too late!

To book a free 15 minute consultation to see if laser therapy is right for you, or for more information about Dr. Deidre Macdonald's naturopathic medical practice in downtown Courtenay, contact her office at 250 897-0235 or check out www.getwellhere.com. Most extended health plans accepted.