



SELF-MANAGEMENT: PATIENTS SECTION

Self-care—Stretching the front of your hip[☆]

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Tightness in the front of the hip is a common problem. It can predispose a person to low back or knee pain. It is often stretched in yoga with the warrior pose and in gyms when kneeling. However, it is very important to “isolate” the stretch to the front of the hip without stressing the back by creating a sway back posture.

The front of the hip typically loses its mobility over time. The main muscle crossing from your low back and pelvis to your thigh is called the psoas or iliopsoas. When we sit for prolonged periods of time, this muscle is placed in a shortened position. As we age, the muscle loses its natural extensibility and becomes shorter or tighter. Since this is a major postural muscle, we tend to become slouched forward and compensate with a sway back as a result of this muscle’s tightness.

There are a number of excellent ways to keep the psoas loose. Kneeling, standing, and recumbent lying can all be used. The standing position has the added value that it is performed in a functional position which mimics how we use the muscle in daily life.

For each flexibility exercise follow these basic steps:

- position yourself so that you are in good posture and balanced (i.e. supported);

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- begin by slowly taking the slack out of the muscle so you can “isolate” the stretch to the target tissue;
- maintain normal respiration and be conscious that you are staying relaxed;
- gradually “take out the slack” in the muscle you are stretching;
- hold the final stretch position for no more than one or two breaths;
- repeat the procedure 8–10 times;
- perform 2 × /day.

As a general rule, perform each stretch slowly, while maintaining normal respiration, and repeat 8–10 times. Traditional stretches are held for 10–30s and repeated only once or twice. The stretching taught here involves shorter hold times and more repetitions so as to maximize the limbering and “warm-up” component.

Kneeling hip stretch

Purpose

- This is a good psoas stretch for a younger person without a significant knee problem that would preclude kneeling on their “bad” knee. This position provides excellent support, so a deep stretch can be obtained.

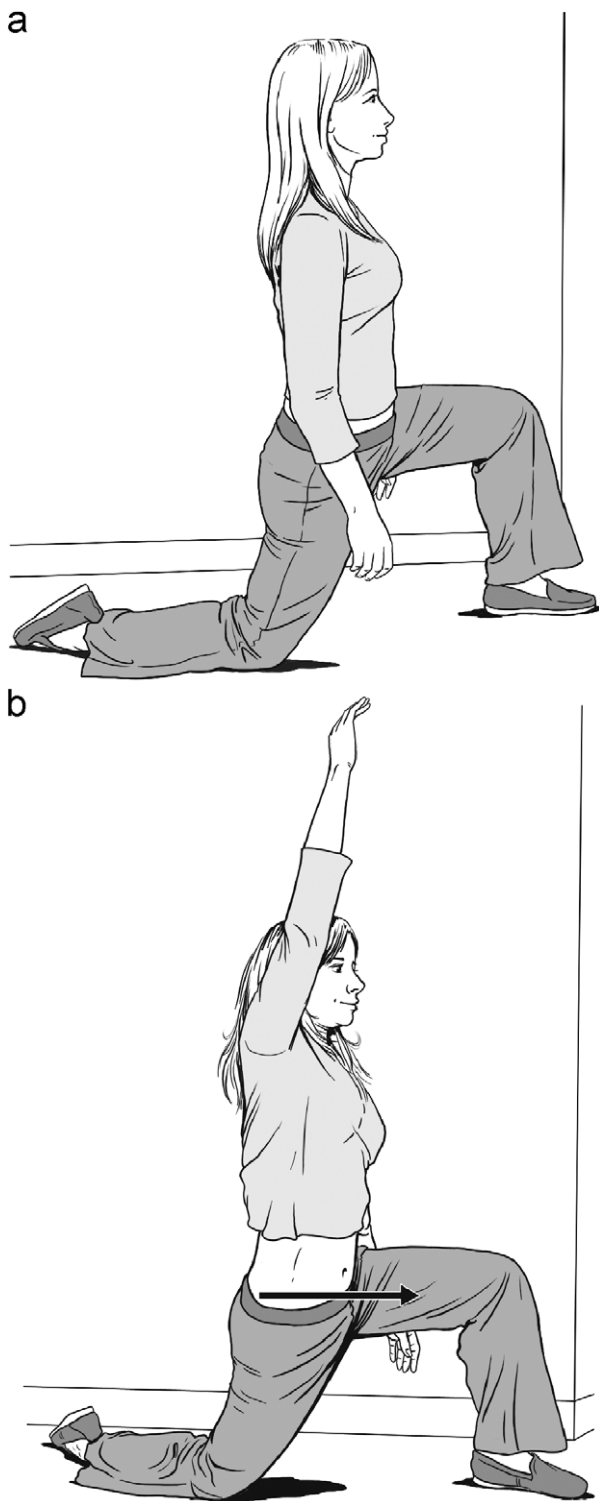


Figure 1 Kneeling hip stretch: (a) start position and (b) stretch position.

Procedure

- Kneel on one knee on the side you wish to stretch.

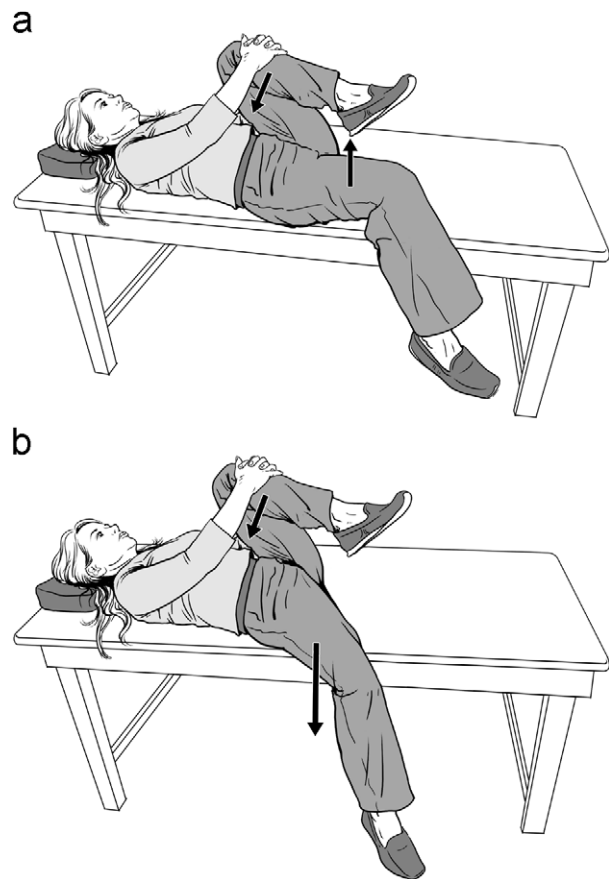


Figure 2 Recumbent hip stretch: (a) start position and (b) stretch position.

- Have a chair or wall next to you on the side opposite to the hip you are stretching.
- Position yourself so that on your opposite leg your foot is under and slightly in front of your knee.
- Squeeze your buttocks so that your pelvis tilts backwards until you feel a light pull in the front of your thigh.
- Gently push your thigh forward until you feel the stretch lightly increase.
- Raise your arm on the side you are stretching and bend your trunk away from that hip.
- Repeat this 8–10 times (see Fig. 1).

Recumbent hip stretch

Purpose

- This is an ideal hip stretch for an elderly person who cannot kneel comfortably or balance well. This position utilizes gravity to provide a gentle stretch to the front of the hip.

Procedure

- Lie on your back on the side of your bed.
- Hug one knee tightly to your chest while dropping the other leg off the side of the bed.
- Let the other leg hang towards the floor.
- If your foot touches the floor, hug your opposite knee tighter to your chest until the foot comes up off the floor.
- Raise your knee and thigh up about 1 in and hold it there for one or two breaths.
- Then, let your knee drop as far as it will towards the floor.
- Repeat this 8–10 times (see Fig. 2).

Standing hip stretch

Purpose

- Upright hip stretches are crucial to ensure that you maintain good flexibility during sports (e.g.

golf, tennis), recreation (e.g. walking), and daily activities (e.g. vacuuming, lifting).

Procedure

- Bring a chair near to a wall.
- Stand with one foot on the chair (the side closest to the wall).
- Position yourself so that the foot on the chair is slightly in front of your knee.
- Move your foot that is on the floor slightly backwards to open up the front of your hip and stand on the ball of your foot.
- Squeeze your buttocks so that your pelvis tilts backwards until you feel a light pull in the front of your thigh.
- Push off the floor slightly from the ball of your back foot until you feel the front of the hip stretching.
- Raise your arm on the side you are stretching and bend your trunk away from that hip.
- Finally, turn your torso slightly towards the side you are stretching.
- Repeat this 8–10 times (see Fig. 3).

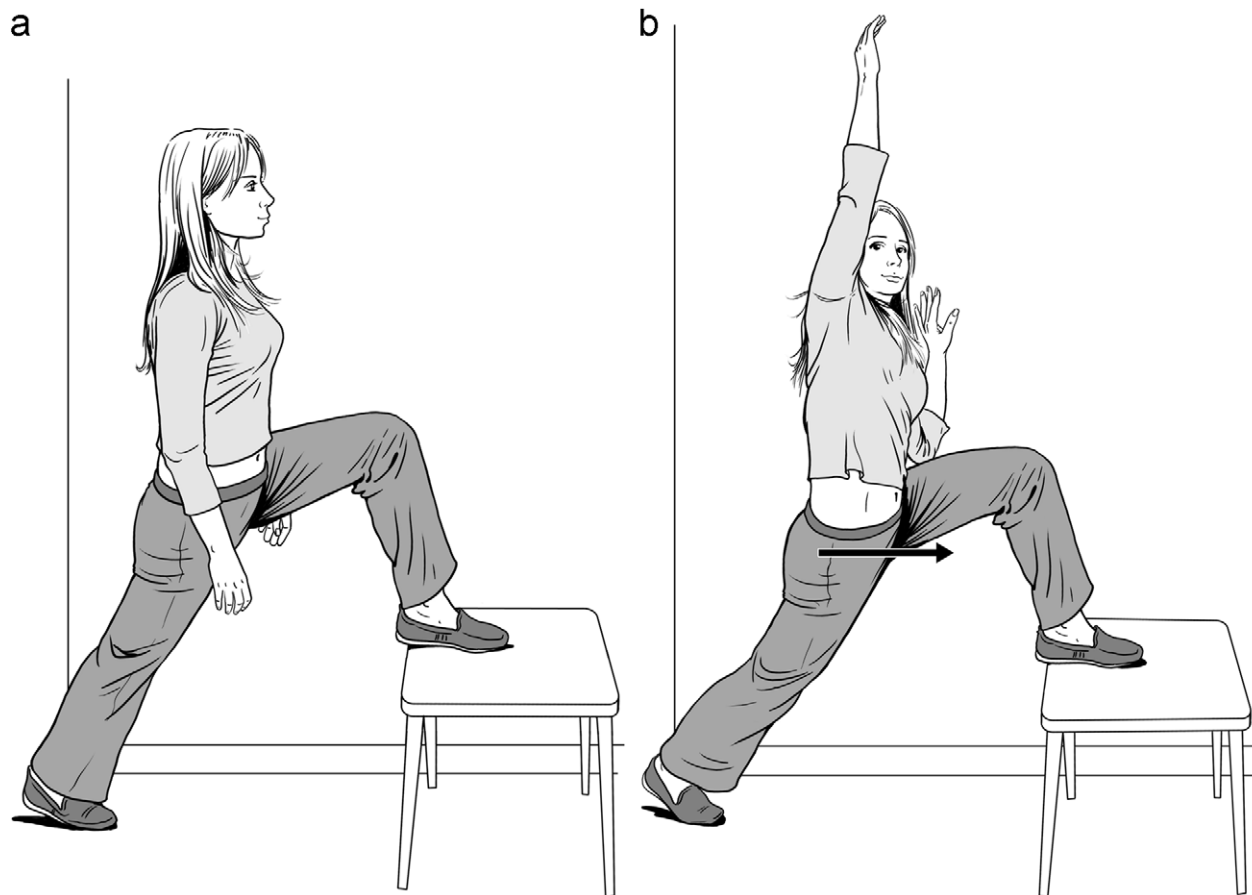


Figure 3 Standing hip stretch: (a) start position and (b) stretch position.

Modification

- Perform without the chair in the middle of the floor away from a wall.
- After bending your trunk away from the hip you are stretching slightly rotate your body towards the hip you are stretching.
- Repeat this 8–10 times.
- This modification is a progression towards a more functional stretch since both feet are on the ground and there is no balance support from the wall (see Fig. 4).

Functional hip stretch—the angle lunge with arm reach

Purpose

- Functional hip stretches are designed to teach you to transfer the feeling of “opening up” your hip in “isolated” positions such as the stretches

above to your actual functional sports, recreational, and daily activities.

- This exercise helps to improve your balance, flexibility and coordination during pushing, punching, throwing, tennis, and golf activities.

Procedure

- Stand facing straight ahead with your arms at your side.
- Imagine you are in the middle of a clock face facing towards 12:00.
- Step with your left leg towards 10:00 while allowing your body to lower part way towards the floor.
- While you step, turn your waist and reach with your right arm towards 10:00.
- Consciously “isolate” the movement to the front of your back hip so that you feel a stretch their with each step.
- Your stride and depth is determined by your ability to maintain balance and keep your lower back straight.
- Repeat this 8–10 times.

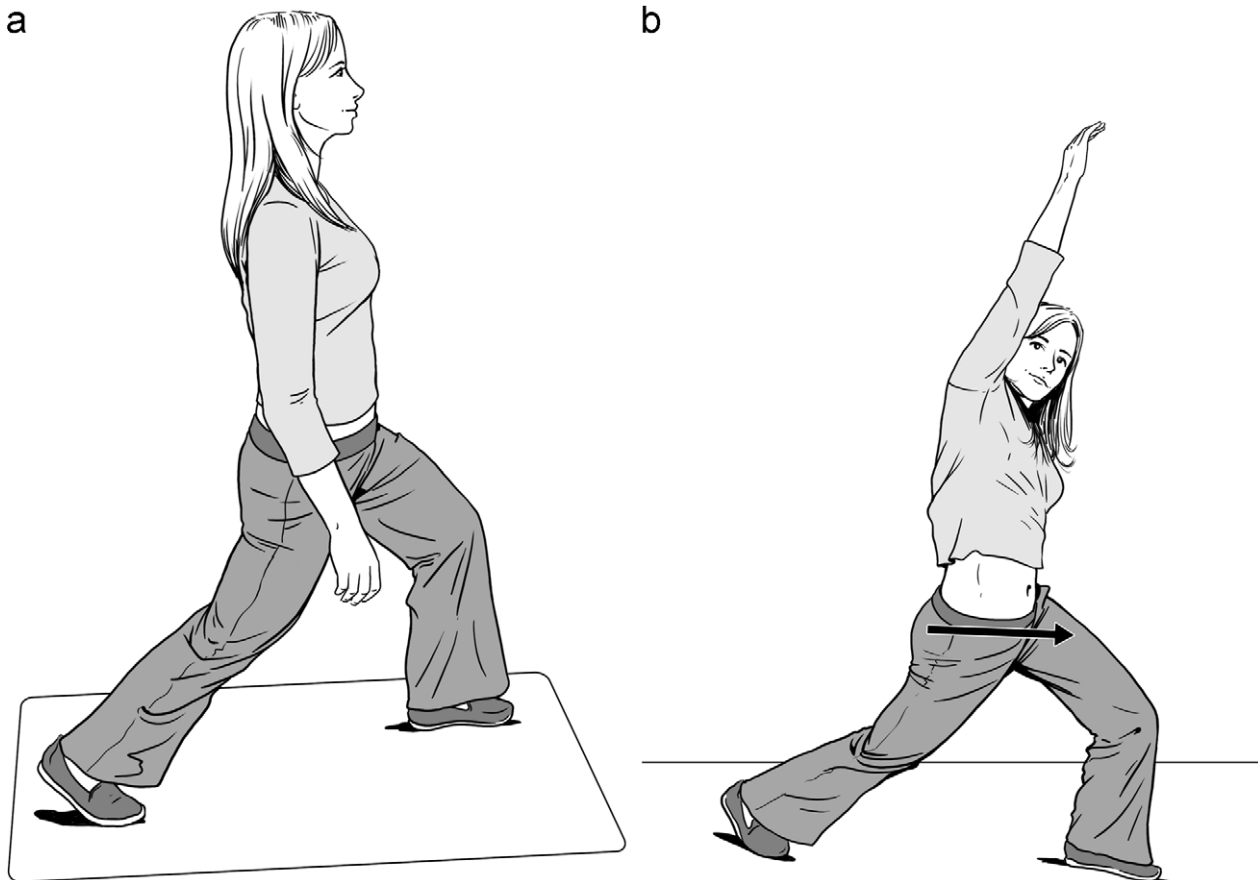


Figure 4 Standing hip stretch without support: (a) start position and (b) stretch position.



Figure 5 Angle lunge with a reach.

- Reaching across your body with your right arm so that your spine is twisted—your shoulders and hips should turn to 10:00 together so that your spine is not twisting.
- Sway back or forward slouch.
- Uneven shoulders (hiking one)—they should be level or square (see Fig. 5).

Common errors to avoid

- Not rotating your back foot—it should pivot.
- Having your back foot flat—in the final stretch position you should be on the balls of your back foot.

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