

[IMAGE]

Get Those Hammies in Shape

By Editorial Staff

Anyone who's ever suffered a hamstring strain or tear understands the importance of keeping your hamstring muscles – on the back of each leg, running from approximately the buttocks to the knee – strong and flexible. Unfortunately, it's often subject to injury because many people tend to focus on other muscles and take their hamstrings for granted. Big mistake.

But *you're* not like *them*. You care about your hamstrings, so you're going to follow these great tips to the letter of the law. Here are four ways to minimize the risk of hamstring injury by keeping these important muscles toned, strong and flexible:

1. Chair Stretch: Seated at the front edge of a chair with hands holding the seat at your sides for support, straighten one leg in front of the body with the heel of the foot on the floor. Then sit up straight and attempt to push your navel toward the thigh without leaning forward. Hold for 30 seconds and repeat three times. Then do the same with the other leg.

exercise - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark *2. Pelvic Curl:* Lie on the floor with your knees bent and feet flat, hip-distance apart. Your arms should be at your sides, palms down. Pull your abs in as you slowly curl the pelvis up, raising your lower, middle and then upper back off the floor. Stay in this lifted position with glutes held tight and abs pulled in for a few seconds. Then lower back down to the floor, starting with the upper back. Repeat several times.

3. Band Stretch: Still lying on the floor, place a band around the arch of your foot and extend the leg toward the ceiling as high as you can go without lifting your hip off the floor. Hold for 45-60 seconds, release and then repeat with the opposite leg.

4. Hamstring Curl: This exercise can be performed with a band on the floor or with a leg curling machine at your local gym. For the band version, lie on your stomach and hook the band around one ankle. Slowly bend your knee and bring the foot up toward your head until the lower leg is at approximately a 90 degree angle with the lower leg. Lower to starting position and repeat. Do three sets of 10 repetitions for each leg.

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