



The Whirring of New Bike Chains is in the Air!

Spring is upon us! Birds are singing, plants are blooming, and people are dusting off their bikes in preparation for the riding season. But before you put too many miles on those pedals, there are a few key stretching and strengthening exercises that will help you to prevent injury and improve your performance on your bike!

Studies have shown that adherence to a consistent stretching program can prevent injury during sports. The entire body is being worked while cycling, but there are specific muscle groups that require more flexibility for an efficient and effective pedal stroke.

The hamstring muscle is a grouping of muscles in the back of your thigh. These muscles help to create power through your entire pedal stroke, particularly during pull-up phase. Additionally, flexibility of this muscle group allows you to have a longer pedal stroke and to lean farther forward on your bike for a more aggressive position.

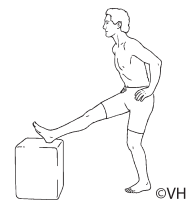
The quadriceps and hip flexor group of muscles make up the power house behind pedaling. These muscles are the most active when you are pushing down on the pedal, but they also work with the hamstring muscles to pull the pedal up behind you. Good flexibility of this muscle grouping helps to prevent low back and knee problems.

The lateral rotators of your hip are comprised of quite a few different muscles. While these muscles do not play a huge role in creating power while cycling, they do provide stability for the hip joint. Without this stability, bigger muscle groups around the hip, pelvis, and low back would not be able to create power in an effective manner. Additionally, flexibility of these muscle groups and the hip joint decreases probability of a variety of low back, hip, and knee injuries.

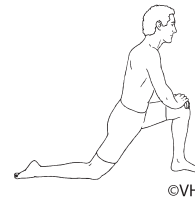
While pedaling, many people find themselves in a hunched forward position. This position puts your neck, shoulders, and entire spine in a difficult position to maintain. Without the proper flexibility, body positioning, and bike fit, this can cause pain and injury over time. In order to prevent stiffness throughout these upper joints, the body should find the opposite position it is in on the bike on a regular basis.

Cycling is an amazing way to play outside, but remember to always be safe and wear your helmet! If you have pain or discomfort while pedaling, be sure to consult with a TAI CycleFit trained PT to be certain your pedaling experience is as comfortable and productive as you want it to be!

By: Morgan Denny, PT, DPT, Staff Physical Therapist, TAI Downtown Portland



HAMSTRING:
Place right foot on stool. Slowly lean forward, keeping back straight, until stretch is felt in back of thigh. Hold 60 seconds.



HIP FLEXOR:
Kneeling on right knee, slowly push pelvis down while slightly arching back until stretch is felt on front of hip. Hold 60 seconds. Additionally, more flexible people can reach back and grasp the foot to bend the knee for an increased stretch.



PIRIFORMIS:
Cross legs, right on top. Gently pull other knee toward chest until stretch is felt in buttock/hip of top leg. Hold 60 seconds.



UPPER THORACIC STRETCH:
Sit or stand with hands clasped behind neck. Gently bending head and shoulders back. Hold 5-10 seconds. Relax.