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Hip Flexor Flexibility in Hockey

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Can you explain the importance of having a flexible hip flexor?

Flexibility - referring to the range of motion of a joint or series of joints - can provide increase a hockey player's stride length, their 90-degree "deep seat" skating position, and greatly reduce their chances and incidents of injury.

Increased flexibility in these areas will also allow a goaltender to contort, close holes and scramble for pucks in key situations.

As a hockey player, the skater looks for optimal stride length and power in each stride. To do this, the deep seat position is essential.

Many elite level hockey players spend so much time trying to increase lower body power and strength that they begin to create overdeveloped quadricep muscles, actually inhibiting the skater from lowering fully into the deep seat skating position. At all levels, unfortunately, hockey players tend to overlook the importance of increasing flexibility in the hip flexor & groin.

How will a lack of flexibility in this area hinder an athlete?

#1 Top Speed:

Poor range of motion can mean the difference between 4 strides to the puck or 7 strides. If a hockey player cannot not appropriately load their skating stride by comfortably getting positioned in a 90 degree seat position then the athlete is going to decrease their stride length by 3-5 inches. This can lead to lack of power /inefficiency, overall top end speed, and ultimately losing races to the puck or open spaces on the ice.

#2 Gap Control:

Poor range of motion in the hip girdle region will decrease a defenseman's ability to externally rotate when closing the gap or pivoting to close off opponents against the glass. Defensemen must be able to

rotate and pivot, allowing them to put themselves into a forward stride quickly. The inability to do this will allow forwards to power past you to the net.

#3 Power Output:

Lack of flexibility in the abductors and adductors will inhibit the athlete from fully powering their legs outward in a skating motion. Lose the power output and the athlete will receive little to no “Toe Snap” allowing for that extra kick in a hockey player’s stride.

What are 5 drills and stretches I can do to increase my flexibility?

At BlueStreak Sports Training we emphasize the importance of hip range of motion exercises especially for hockey players to internally and externally rotate the hips for high-performance skating development.

Promote and add dynamic movements to your warm-up and cool-down routines. Great ones are hurdle mobility drills and agility drills where you must externally rotate the hip flexor. Also, add specific skating movement drills to your daily routine, allowing you to feel more comfortable in the 90 degree deep seat skating position. All of these movements will not only allow you to increase your range of motion but get you more comfortable doing so at game speed on the ice.

1. Buddha Quad / Hip Flexor stretch

- Sit flat on ground with legs straight out in front of body
- Cross arms at chest height (to not allow upper body help)
- Raise right leg and try to bend leg into a quad stretch manner (no upper-body help) so your thigh close to your chest.
- Return right leg back to neutral and repeat with left
- 5 reps each leg
- Repeat 2 times

2. Backward Hip-Openers w/ skip:

- Facing backwards, drive right knee up
- Externally rotating your right knee, opening your “right” hip up and out
- Returning to both feet on ground
- Repeat with left leg
- Begin to repeat in skipping motion
- Repeat 10-12 yards
- 2-3 times

3. Kneeling Hip Flexor stretch w/ towel:

- Lunge Position
 - Keep front knee behind toes
 - Lower back knee to ground, keeping back foot up
 - Attach back foot to a stretch rope /towel and pull rope lightly up over your shoulder, gradually increasing stretch
 - Hold 3 seconds
 - Repeat 4 times each side
4. Spiderman Elbow to Instep:
- Large forward lunge in 45 degree angle w/ right leg
 - Reach forward with right elbow to instep
 - Maintain low position and lunge forward with left leg and left elbow
 - Repeat 10-12 yards
 - 2-3 times
5. Kneeling Hip Circles:
- Position yourself on all fours
 - Lift right leg up and externally rotate it in semi-circle manner
 - Return to all fours position and repeat with left side
 - Repeat 2 sets of 12 reps each

What are some of the biggest mistakes you see?

Athletes must maintain proper speed and techniques with all exercises. In addition athlete must make these exercises a fixture in their regimen 2-3 times a week in order to see permanent results.

What are the sets, reps and rest time?

Perform all activities 2-3 times per week prior to and /or after activity. Make sure proper tempo and technique is executed at all times. Please see reps & reps posted above with exercises.