

# Hip Pain and Physical Therapy

## Nonarthritic Hip Pain: What Is It? What Should I Do About It? How Do I Get Back to My Regular Activities?

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If you have hip pain and arthritis has been ruled out, here is what physical therapy can do for you and what might happen when you go to see a physical therapist.

Hip pain can have many causes, both arthritic and nonarthritic. This Perspective for Patients addresses hip pain

that is not associated with arthritis. Nonarthritic hip pain is common and can be related to many different conditions and diagnoses, such as femoroacetabular impingement (FAI), hip dysplasia, hip instability, ligament or labral tears, or chronic hip pain.

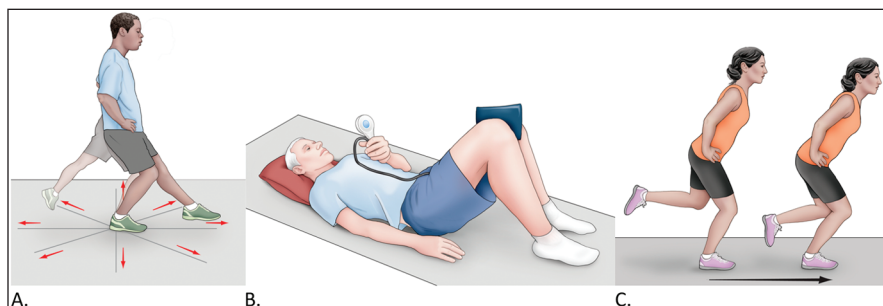
### WHAT TO EXPECT IN PHYSICAL THERAPY IF YOU HAVE HIP PAIN THAT IS NOT ARTHRITIS

If you have hip pain, the recommended first course of action is often to see a physical therapist. When you first meet, the physical therapist might ask you some questions about your hip pain and how it is affecting you. You will also go through some tests of your strength and balance and to see how well your hip joint moves (FIGURE 1). You may also perform some everyday movements to see how your hip pain might affect your day-to-day life or any exercise, sport, or recreation activities you like to do.

Once testing is done, you will discuss the results with your physical therapist and explore what types of treatment might work best for you. Options for managing hip pain include modifying some of your activities for a brief period of time, stretching, hands-on therapy such as massage, and different types of exercises. Exercises that

target the hip, trunk, or leg muscles can help alleviate hip pain and improve your strength, movement, and balance (FIGURE 2).

Once you agree on a treatment plan that is best for you, your physical therapist will reassess your strength, movement, and balance at regular intervals to ensure you are



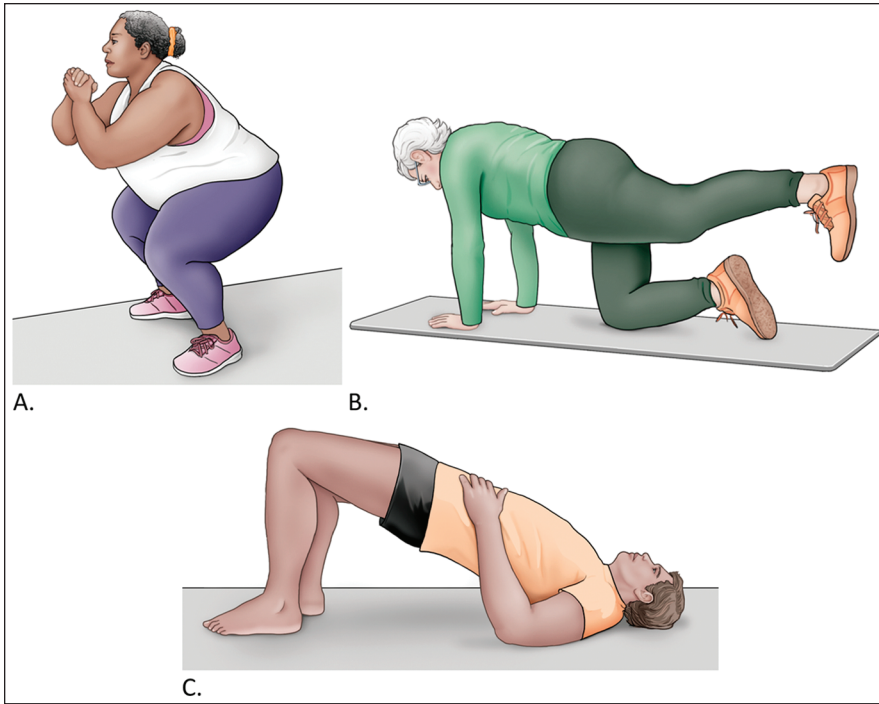
**FIGURE 1.** Tests can include (A) Star Excursion Balance Test, (B) Hip Adductor Squeeze Test, and (C) Single-Leg Hop Test. (A) The Star Excursion Balance Test is a challenging balance test where you stand on one foot and reach your other foot out to each point of an 8-point “star” marked on the floor. The goal is to stand steady on your support leg while reaching your other leg as far away from your body as possible without losing balance. (B) For the Hip Adductor Squeeze Test, an inflated cuff with a pressure gauge attached (like a blood pressure cuff) is placed between your knees and you squeeze your knees together as hard as you can. The pressure gauge measures how much force you generate with your inner thigh muscles. (C) The Single-Leg Hop Test is exactly like it sounds. Your physical therapist will look at how your legs, hips, and pelvis move while hopping and landing on one leg.

This JOSPT Perspectives for Patients article was produced by Patient and Public Partnerships Editor Joletha Belton, and a team of JOSPT’s editorial board and staff, led by Editor-In-Chief Clare Ardern, and illustrated by Jeanne Robertson. For more in-depth information, see the 2023 Clinical Practice Guideline “Hip Pain and Movement Dysfunction Associated With Nonarthritic Hip Joint Pain: A Revision” (*J Orthop Sports Phys Ther*. 2023;53:CPG1-CPG70. <https://doi.org/10.2519/jospt.2023.0302>). For hip pain related to osteoarthritis, see <https://www.jospt.org/doi/full/10.2519/jospt.2018.0507>. For this and more topics, visit JOSPT Perspectives for Patients online at [www.jospt.org](http://www.jospt.org).



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making progress toward your goals. Many people with hip pain are able to get back to their usual activities with physical therapy, without needing to have surgery. If surgery is recommended, physical therapy can help you prepare for the best possible outcome.



**FIGURE 2.** Hip exercises can include (A) bodyweight squats. Trunk and leg exercises can include (B) bird-dog, and (C) gluteal bridges. (A) Bodyweight squats: stand with your hips shoulder width apart and feet pointing straight ahead. Bend at your hips as you reach your buttocks backwards as if you are going to sit in a chair. Keep your heels on the ground and your back, shoulders, and head upright. Slowly lower and slowly return to standing. Repeat. (B) Bird-dog: start on all fours, with your hands directly beneath your shoulders and your knees directly beneath your hips. Keep your low back flat (i.e. don't let your belly sink towards the floor or arch your back) and slowly lift one knee off the floor, straightening your leg out behind you. Your neck stays long, and your shoulders straight. Bend your extended leg and slowly bring your knee back to the floor underneath your hip. Repeat on the other side. For an extra challenge, extend your opposite arm alongside your ear as you straighten your leg behind you. (C) Gluteal bridges: lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the surface. Gently squeeze your buttocks as you lift your hips up, keeping your spine straight, feet planted, and your shoulders relaxed. Slowly raise, slowly lower. Repeat.