Lateral Hip Pain

Pain on the outside (lateral) of the hip is commonly due to gluteal tendinopathy or gluteal/trochanteric bursitis.

The gluteal tendons are thick bands of tissue that attach the gluteals muscles to the top of the leg bone (femur). There is a fluid sack that sits between the bone and the tendon that is susceptible to become compressed and rubbed with repetitive movements, especially movements such as squatting, stairs, hills and lunging.

The symptoms of a gluteal tendinopathy include a stiffness and pain in the morning or the start of activity that improves once it warms up. There may be crunchy sounds and it is often quite sore to touch. Trochanteric bursitis tends to have a much sharper pain that will worsen with increased activity. You might not like laying on that side or crossing your legs if you have hip bursitis.

Women are more at risk than men, and this is likely due pelvis shape, creating a larger angle and more compression at the side of the hip. It is very common it repetitive activity such as hiking, walking, cycling and running, especially when any of those activities involve inclines or declines.

It is important to accurately diagnose the problem as treatment will differ depending on what condition you have - gluteal tendinopathy or tendonitis, trochanteric bursitis, or even a combination of both!

Patellofemoral Pain Syndrome (PFPS)

The patellofemoral joint (PFJ), or knee cap, acts as a pulley between the powerful quadricep muscles and the patella tendon just below the knee. It allows us to create big powerful movements, but because it is mobile it is susceptible to injury.

Many types of PFJ pain exist (that is an article in itself!) - but the most common issue occurs when the joint surface (cartilage) is overloaded, causing it to become irritated, inflamed and painful.

PFPS is often stiff first thing in the morning and improves with some gentle movement. If too much movement occurs, or it is subject to lots of squats, lunges, stairs, inclines, declines etc. it will deteriorate and become more painful. Often people have to stop all activity because of the pain.

Bushwalkers and hikers are particularly susceptible to this injury as heavy boots, the weight of a backpack, uneven trails with lots of steps and hills create the perfect environment for PFPS. Other risk factors for PFPS include abnormal foot biomechanics, gluteal weakness, poor hip and knee ‘control’, muscle tightness and a previous leg injury.

As the cause of PFPS is variable and specific to each individual, a ‘one-size-fits-all’ treatment approach is often unhelpful. It is important to assess which ‘factors’ are contributing the most to your knee pain to efficiently and effectively treat the underlying cause of your pain, not just the symptoms!