

HIP FLEXORS

The forgotten muscle group

BY CHRISTINE FELSTEAD

The hip flexors are comprised of the quadriceps and the iliopsoas muscles and for many of us these muscles are chronically tight. Tight hip flexors pull the pelvis forward into an anterior tilt, which in turn creates lumbar hyperextension leading to lower back discomfort. Tight quads also contribute to knee pain.

Tight hip flexors are understandable for anyone with an athletic or fitness background since any action that involves extending the leg works the hip flexors. However, another key cause of hip flexor tightness is our western culture requiring us to sit for such extended periods of time

Virtually all of our daily movements require some aspect of bending forward; therefore, many people are aware of their hamstring and lower back restrictions. Unless there is a specific injury, very little natural daily movements make us aware of hip flexor tightness. So a typical 'stretch' routine is more likely to include hamstring stretching and very little, if any, hip flexor work. Even regular yoga can create further imbalance as many yoga practices have a greater emphasis on forward bending than back bending. Yoga is designed to help restore the body to balance and symmetry so I encourage a healthy balance between stretching the front and back body.

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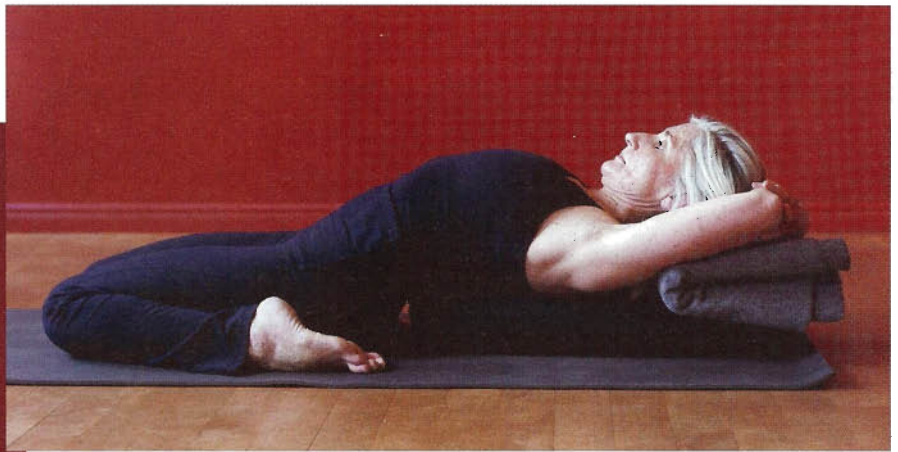
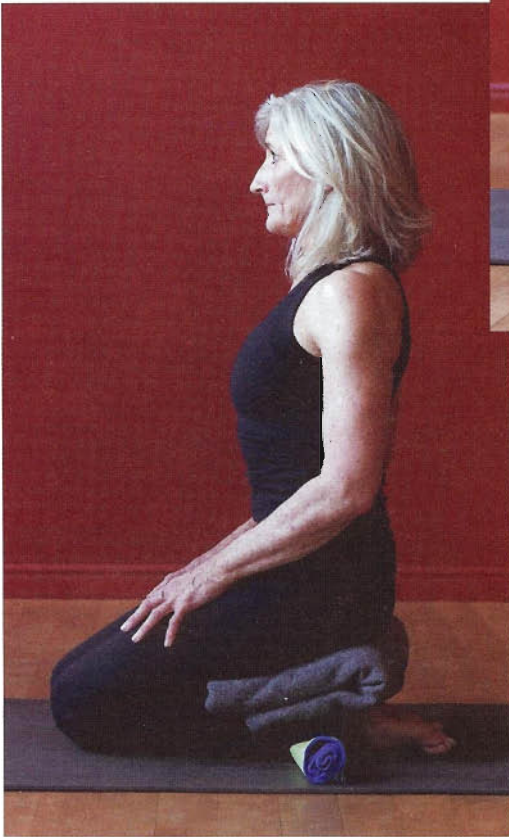
GENERAL PRACTICE GUIDELINES:

CAUTION: Many hip flexor poses require the knee to be in deep flexion. Stretching the quads when they are tight can

patience and regular stretching.

• Unless otherwise indicated, hold all poses for five to 15

HERO POSE



Kneel on a folded blanket with toes touching. Heels will naturally splay apart but try to bring them together--slowly and over time. Slowly sit back on the heels and adjust your props as necessary.

Prop 1: if tops of feet hurt, place rolled blanket beneath instep.

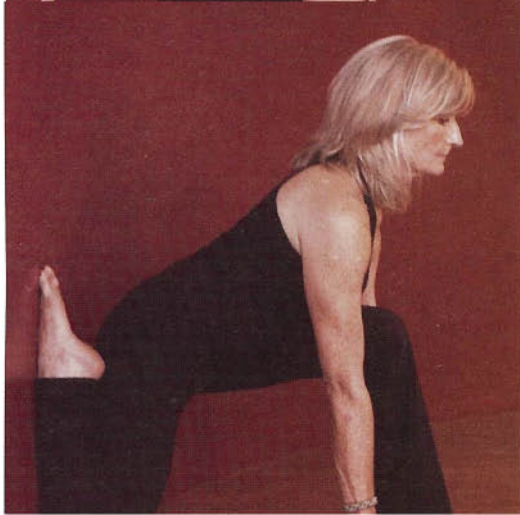
Prop 2: if you feel strain or tugging at knees, sit on a folded blanket.

No props: sitting bones rest on the heels.

Starter: Sit upright, relax the shoulders, and lengthen through the crown of your head.

Move Towards: Separate feet to hip width and sit on floor between heels. Ensure toes point straight back, not splayed. Pressing shin bones and tops of feet to the floor, start to lay back onto support of a bolster. Curl tailbone under and lift front hip bones. Keep knees grounded and pressing forward.

SHIN UP WALL



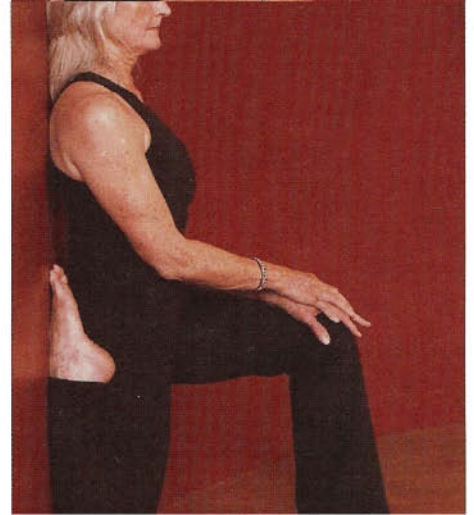
Place a folded blanket at the wall. From hands and knees, slide one shin up the wall and let knee come to the floor. Step other leg forward to 90°. If too intense, move the knee a few inches away from the wall.

Starter: Hands on floor and hips tilted forward.

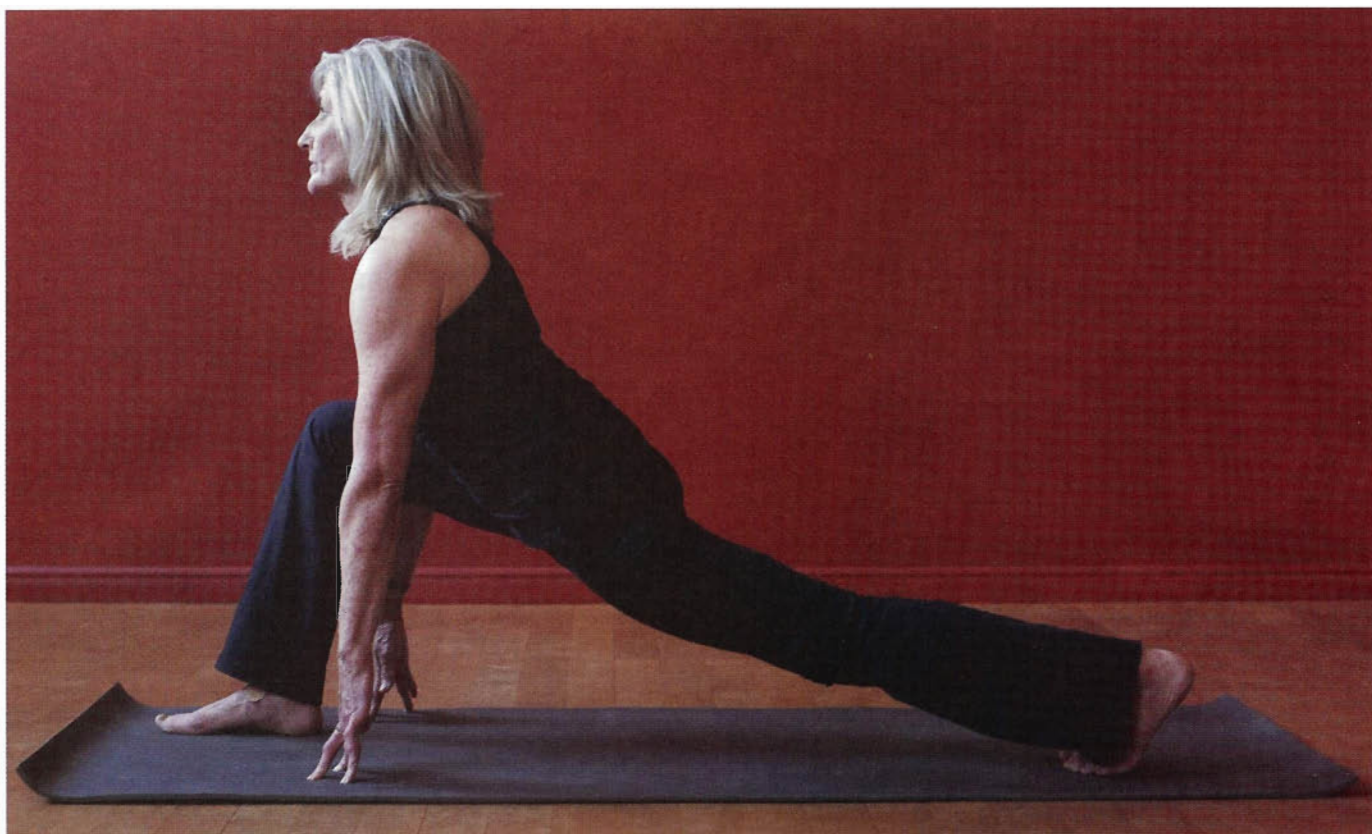
let knee come to the floor. Step other leg forward to 90°. If too intense, move the knee a few inches away from the wall.

Starter: Hands on floor and hips tilted forward.

Move Towards: Upright position with back to the wall. As you move more upright, drop the tailbone, lift the front hip bones, draw belly in and press lower back towards the wall. To come out of this pose, take



LUNGES



Low Lunge

Starter: Low Lunge

- Start on hands and knees with hands under the shoulders.
- Step right foot to right hand, keeping your knee over the ankle and leg at 90°.
- Press right foot firmly to the ground and contract outer right hip inward to stay in line with the right knee.
- Step left foot back, curl the toes under and straighten the leg. Lift front of thigh and press back through the heel.
- Lift breast bone and draw shoulders down.

High Lunge

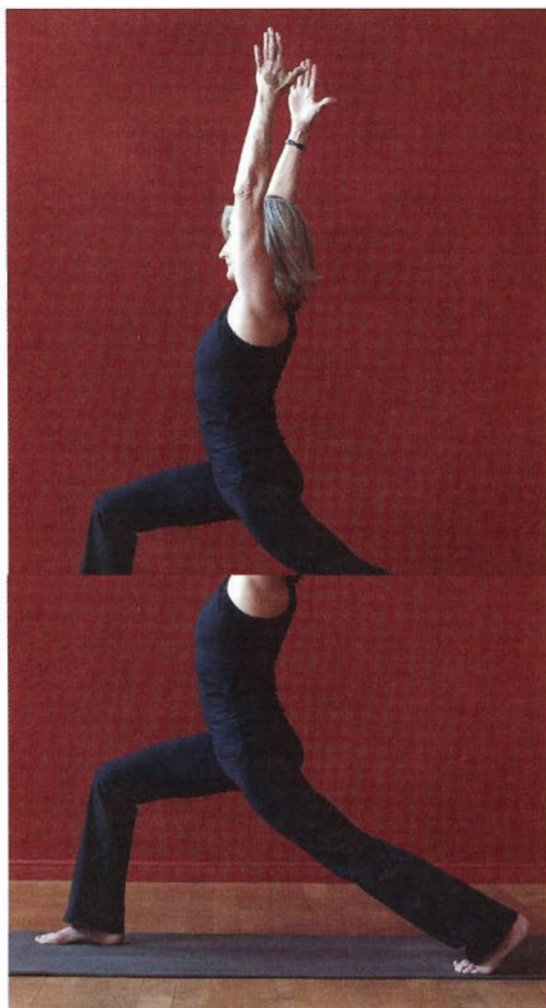
Move Towards: High Lunge

- Step left foot back, curl the toes under and straighten the leg. Lift front of thigh and press back through the heel.
- Lift breast bone and draw shoulders down.

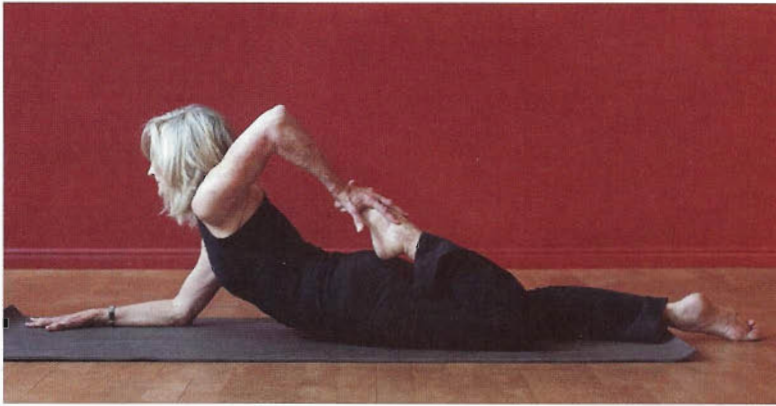
High Lunge

Move Towards: High Lunge

- From low lunge position, place hands on front thigh and move upright. Drop tailbone, lift front hip bones and square the hips.
- Extend arms overhead and press shoulders down.
- Lift the belly and press lower ribs in.
- As in Low Lunge, fully straighten the back leg.

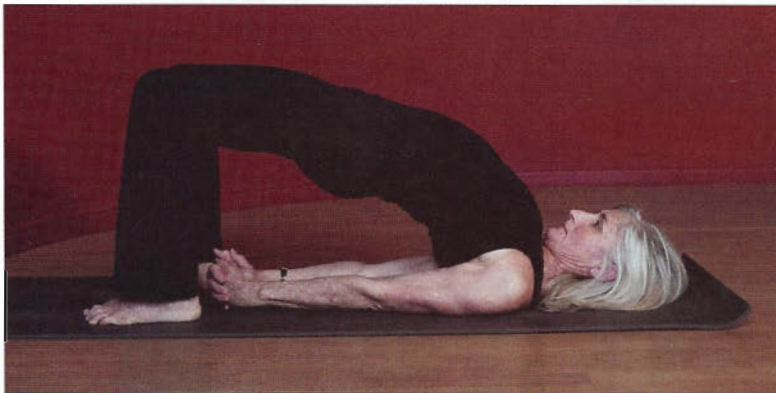


FROG



Frog

- Lie on your belly with legs straight. Draw your sitting bones towards heels to lengthen the lower back and keep pubic bone on the floor.
- Bend right leg and take right hand to top of foot. Gently press heel to buttock to lengthen quadriceps. Keep hip bone grounded.
- Place left arm in front of body, pressing forearm to the floor, lift the breast bone and keep belly drawn in.



Bridge

- Lie on the floor with legs bent, feet hip distance and toes pointing forward.
- Without tilting the pelvis out of neutral, lift the hips by engaging the hamstrings, roll shoulders under, interlace fingers and reach knuckles towards the feet.
- Firm the shoulder blades against your back, and press the top of the sternum toward the chin. □

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