

The iliopsoas hip flexor muscle.



The iliopsoas is an important hip flexor muscle. It involves the fusion of two muscle groups, one originating from the lumbar spine, and one starting on the pelvis, both attaching to the proximal femur in the groin area.

Contraction of the iliopsoas muscle moves the hind leg forward by externally rotating and flexing the hip joint. There are three common ways a dog can strain its iliopsoas muscle. The most common way is by excessive stretching of the muscle during athletic activities involving fast running, jumping, or turning. If a dog accidentally slips and splays out its legs sideways, this is the second common cause. The third common cause is excessive tightening of the groin muscle to protect a primary orthopedic or neurologic issue in the hind end.

The clinical signs of an iliopsoas muscle strain include pain and lameness typically in one limb. If the dog is painful when the affected hip is extended and the hind leg is internally rotated, an iliopsoas muscle strain is highly suspect. Often times the dog is lame on the affected limb and the lameness gets worse with exercise. Acute muscle strains will not show up on an x-ray because only soft tissue is involved. Chronic tears may have mineral deposits in the muscle that may show up on an x-ray. Ultrasound, CT scan or MRI may detect an iliopsoas tear. The most common way to detect a strain is from clinical examination as described above.

Fortunately, recovery from an iliopsoas muscle strain is typically 4 to 6 weeks with the proper diagnosis and treatment plan. Treatment includes controlled activity, muscle relaxers, NSAIDS, and cold compress to the groin area. Rehab therapy including cold laser, chiropractic and acupuncture are also beneficial to healing a strained iliopsoas muscle. After the recommended rest period, the dog can start a specific strength building program which includes cavaletti poles, wobble board, and balance boards as recommended by a veterinarian or certified canine rehab practitioner. The best prevention of an iliopsoas muscle strain is to ensure your dog is properly warmed up and stretched before asking it to do high level activities. To learn more about iliopsoas muscle injuries, check out the following link. <http://www.akcchf.org/assets/files/canine-athlete/Iliopsoas-Tendinopathy-groin-pull.pdf>