

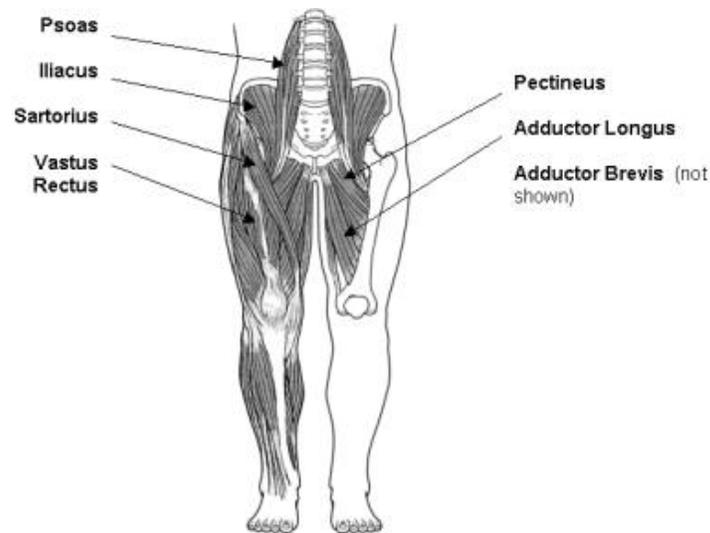
Break Free from Hip Flexion

by Joe Giandonato, MS, CSCS

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Alleviate lower back pain and tightness in the hips, with this simple stretch.

Lower back pain is a prevalent, but a largely preventable issue that many office workers face. Think about your day – if you work a desk job, like me during the day, you’re seated for most of it. Aside from the first hour upon awakening, when you’re getting ready for work, your hips are in perpetual flexion throughout the day, interspersed with few periods of movement. Most office workers days consist of sitting - beginning with their commute to work, throughout the majority of their work day, followed by their commute home and concluding with a few hours of lame reality TV, while parked on the sectional.



The hip flexor group consists of the Rectus Femoris, Iliopsoas, Sartorius, Pectineus, and the Adductor Longus and Brevis muscles. The hip flexors flex the torso forward and assist with pulling the knees up and regularly assist with other activities, including lateral and transverse movements.

But, being seated for prolonged periods can cause these muscles to become wrought with tightness, which will create muscular imbalances, possibly causing lower back pain and throw off the proper functioning of the rest of the kinetic chain as your body tries to compensate. So how can we combat this? The solution is simple – get up, move around, and stretch. One stretch that you can use to uncoil tight hip flexors is the Half Kneeling Hip Flexor Stretch.



Follow these simple steps to properly execute the stretch:

1. Position yourself by assuming a kneeling position and extending one of your legs in front of you. You may step into a lunge position and drop the knee of your rear leg so it makes contact with the floor.

Tip: For comfort, you may want to consider situating an exercise mat or Airex pad under the rear legged knee. For people with tighter hip flexors, you may want to consider affixing the rear legged knee atop an aerobic stepper, or if you're in the office, an large manual will suffice.

2. Focus on keeping the front knee over the ankle.

Tip: Your lower leg should be parallel with the wall. Initially, you can place the toe of your shoe against the wall until you are comfortable holding the position.

3. Keep a neutral pelvis without arching your back.

Tip: You'll accomplish this by engaging your abdominal muscles and pulling your shoulders down and back, as if you're squeezing a coin between your shoulder blades. Doing so will keep your torso erect, which will help with the stretch. You may help balance yourself by placing a hand atop your bent knee.

4. Hold for 10 – 20 seconds.

Tip: Be sure to breathe normally throughout the stretch.

5. Alternate legs and repeat.

Consider doing this stretch following a brief walk from the break room or lavatory. Aim to stretch your hip flexors a few times a day and above all else, get out of flexion by getting up and moving!

Joe Giandonato, MS, CSCS, is a Philadelphia-area healthcare support professional and personal trainer, he holds an M.S. in Exercise Science with a specialization in Performance Enhancement and has nearly a decade of personal training experience. Presently, he is employed as a Fitness Specialist with the University of Pennsylvania, Department of Recreation and also trains clients Broad Street Fitness in Philadelphia, PA. He is also pursuing a MBA with a concentration in Healthcare Administration, is a Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist (CSCS) through the National Strength and Conditioning Association and a Performance Enhancement Specialist (PES) through the National Academy of Sports Medicine and a Level 1 Sports Performance Coach through USA Weightlifting. He is also a professional member of the American College of Sports Medicine and the American Society of Exercise Physiologists. Giandonato has authored nearly 50 articles, featured on T-Nation.com, EliteFTS.com, JoshStrength.com, BeyondStrengthPerformance.com, and PersonalTrainersUnited.com. Two of his articles are presently under peer review for publications in scholarly journals. Above all else, he loves helping people achieve their fitness goals!