

Snapping Hip Syndrome - Children

What is Snapping Hip Syndrome?

Snapping hip syndrome is a commonly seen condition in children and adolescence and in most cases can be treated with basic care and exercises. It is an umbrella term for a variety of causes of hip pain and/or clicking.

- Hip pain may cause difficulty when walking and can also be painful to lie on.
- With snapping hip syndrome you may experience a clicking or snapping sensation/ sound around the front, back or side of the hip joint. This may be bothersome for you, however if your hip is not painful the click or snap is nothing to be concerned about. In most cases snapping hip is managed conservatively, (no surgical input required), and home treatments may be sufficient in managing the condition.



Snapping hip syndrome has two main causes:

- **External (muscles involved) –**

There are two main areas where muscles can cause snapping/ clicking.

1. The Iliotibial Band (IT band) which is a thick piece of soft tissue that runs down the outside of your hip joint, into your thigh and ends at your knee. Snapping hip syndrome occurs when the tendon slides over the bony prominence on the outside of your hip and creates a 'cracking' or 'snapping' sound. This most commonly happens when the tendon is tight following a growth spurt. This may also cause you to have knee pain.
2. The Iliopsoas tendon (muscle at front of hip), which typically causes a snapping sensation in the front part of your hip as the tendon slips over a bit of bone on the pelvis.

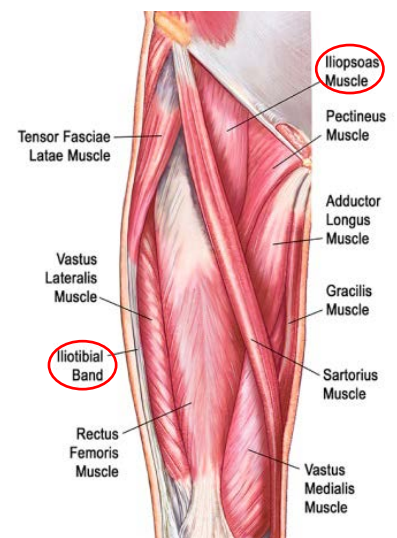
- **Internal (joint is involved)-**

This is the least likely cause of snapping and involves a tear in the hip cartilage or bone debris in the hip joint. This type of snapping usually causes lots of pain and is often related to injury or repetitive trauma.

What are the symptoms of Snapping Hip Syndrome?

As the name indicates, snapping hip syndrome can result in an audible snapping or clicking sound during hip movements. In most cases this causes no pain, however there may be other symptoms you experience with this condition including:

- Pain in your hip or knee
- Inflammation (swelling)
- Weakness in leg
- Difficulty with regular physical activity
- Sensation that your hip is coming out of place, (Do not worry your joint is not actually coming out of place. The hip joint is an incredibly strong and stable joint).



What symptoms might need to be reviewed further by your GP?

- Regular or constant night pain
- Reluctance to weight bear
- Worsening swelling not improved with elevation and rest
- Ankle pain with hip or knee pain
- New limp without pain
- New altered foot positioning i.e foot turning outwards on one side
- Pain not settled with rest or reduction of activity
- Early morning stiffness that takes more than 20 minutes to resolve

Initial management at home

You can try some home treatments to help with symptoms such as;

- Reducing or pacing activities and sports
- Rest and using ice or heat packs on the painful area
- Exercises
- Over-the-counter pain killers

Most of the time patients will find relief with these measures.

These exercises should be complete 2-3 times a day and should also be done before and after sporting events. It is normally advised to completed these exercises as you wake up, when you get home from school and then before you go to bed in the evening. These exercises will help stretch the tight muscles and also help strengthen the weaker muscles around the hip.

Exercise 1- Hip Flexor Stretch

- Kneel on you affected leg with your other leg bent in front
- Pushing your hips forward to take most of your weight onto your front leg.
- You should feel a stretch in the front of your hip.
- Hold the stretch for 30 seconds and repeat 2-3 times a day



Exercise 2- Gluteal/ IT Band stretch

- Stand upright and place your affected leg in front of your other leg.
- Lean downwards in the same direction of your affected leg.
- You should feel a stretch down the outside of your affected leg.
- Hold the stretch for 30 seconds and repeat 2-3 times a day



Exercise 3- Hamstring stretch

- Using a chair place your affected leg up onto the seat
- Pull toes towards your body and you should feel a stretch down the bag of your leg.
- If you can't feel a stretch, lean your body forwards, aim to touch your toes. You can also do this exercise with a bent knee.
- Hold the stretch for 30 seconds and repeat 2-3 times a day



Exercise 4- Side lying leg lift

- Lie on your opposite side to your affected hip
- Lift your affected hip up away from your body
- Don't let your hips roll backward
- If you feel this in your thigh muscles roll further onto your side
- Repeat 8-12 times, 2-3 times a day.



How quickly will my exercises start to make a difference?

Usually you won't feel any noticeable difference for at least 3 weeks, but your hip should start to feel normal again after about 8 weeks. If you find the exercises increase your hip pain or it hurts your hip to do them then you should stop doing them. If the exercises fail to work you should see your Consultant or GP to ask for a referral to physiotherapy for a more in depth assessment and individualised treatment programme.

How soon will I be able to return to normal activities?

If you are experiencing severe pain or you find that the exercises aren't being effective it is advisable to stop all sports for a few weeks whilst your body adapts to the growth and allow the muscles time to stretch. After a few weeks slowly reintroduce the exercises and sport and pace your return to previous level.

Sources of information

Yi-Meng Yen, Cara L. Lewis & Young-JO Kim (2015) 'Understanding and Treating the Snapping Hip' *Sports Medicine and Arthroscopy Review*, 23, (4), 194-199
<https://www.healthline.com/health/snapping-hip-syndrome>
https://www.physio-pedia.com/Snapping_Hip_Syndrome

Important information

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Disclaimer

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After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

Reference

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The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:

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