

How Strong Butt Muscles (Gluts) Can Help Your Hip Pain. How to Test if Weak

All the gluteus muscles (gluteus maximus, gluteus medius, gluteus minimus) play a large role in stabilizing the hip and pelvis. However, the gluteus maximus may be the most important stabilizer of all because it helps keep the head of the femur (top of the hip bone) from sliding forward in the hip socket. If it slides forward it can pinch against soft tissue structures (like the labrum) and cause pain. How that happens - the glut maximus is weak or not firing correctly so the hamstrings take over causing the femur to slide forward.

Bob suffered from this weak glut max/dominate hamstring situation (twice in his running career) resulting in hip pain in the front of the hip. He literally had to stop running for a while. Eventually he changed his running style to engage the gluteus maximus more.

Weak gluteus maximus muscles or gluteal amnesia is quite common. We have become a nation of sitters. When we sit a lot, the gluts become weak and disengaged. Also, with sitting our hip flexors become tight and that reflexively to contributes to the weakness of the gluteus maximus.

Weak gluteus maximus muscles can contribute to back pain, hamstring injuries, and as mentioned hip pain.

Some signs your glut max may be weak:

- The Chair of Death. You must love the name, but it is not as ominous as its name. Stand in front of a chair with your feet under it and your knees touching the seat. Put your arms straight out in front of you. **(See Photo)** Squat down and try not to let your knees push into the chair. If your knees are hitting the chair or you are even moving the chair, your glutes may not work properly. If your knees are hitting the chair you may be initiating the squat with your quadriceps.



- Lie on the floor or bed face down. Place your hand partially on your buttock (palm) and partially on your hamstring (fingertips). Lift your leg straight up from the floor. Which muscle kicked in first? Your hamstring or your glut max. The glut max should be firing first or at least at the same time as the hamstring. Check your other side.



- Get into the same position on the floor or bed with your face down. Bend your right knee 90 degrees or to a right angle. Attempt to lift toward the ceiling. Are you able to do so easily? Have a friend or family member push down on the back of the thigh or hamstring while trying to hold it up. Compare to the left leg.