

How To Find + Trigger Points In The Popliteus Muscle




Dr. Alex Jimenez D.C.



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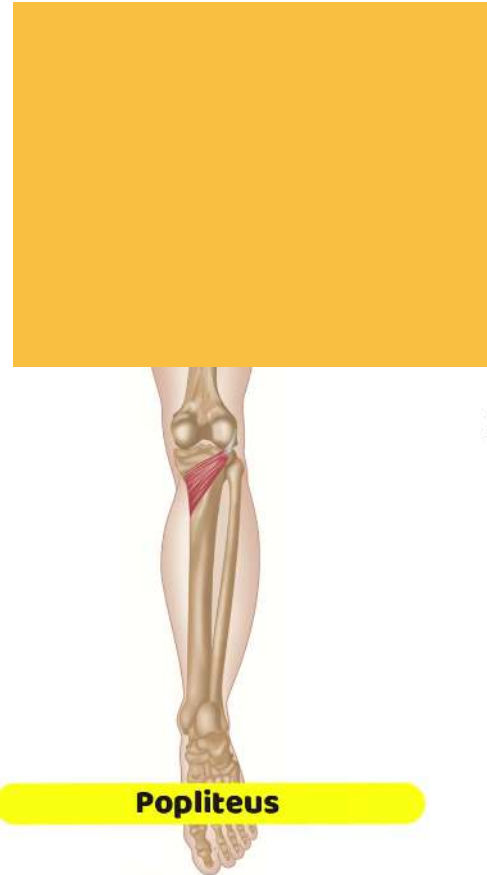
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What Is The Popliteus Muscle?

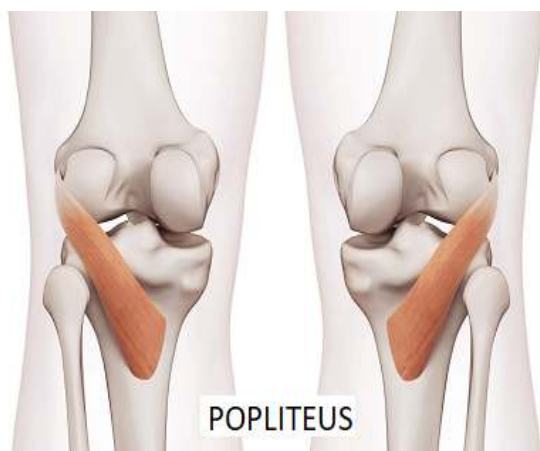
As one of the stabilizers for the body, the knees are located between the thighs and legs, allowing flexion and extension. The knees help the hips by supporting the upper body's weight and allowing the legs to move from one place to another without feeling pain. The knee has various muscles and ligaments surrounding the knee joint, allowing the leg to be bent when active. One of the muscles is located behind the knee, known as the popliteus, and supports the legs. However, minor injuries or actions can affect the knees causing the joint to be in a "lock" position and develop myofascial trigger points that can induce muscle spasms in the knees.

Have you been dealing with pain behind your knees? Do you have issues bending your knees when climbing up or down the stairs? Or do your back knee muscles start to twitch uncontrollably, causing muscle spasms? Many knee issues correlate with various factors that can affect the popliteus muscle and develop trigger points. The popliteus is a small muscle with a very important job as it is a major stabilizing muscle to the knees.



The popliteus muscle originates from the lateral side of the femur and inserts itself into the posterior surface of the tibia. Some attachments are between the popliteus and lateral meniscus, allowing the knees to be in motion and providing flexion without pain and entrapment. Additional studies reveal that when a person exercises, the popliteus's basic function helps bring about and maintain internal rotation of the tibia on the femur.

The popliteus also helps prevent the foot from external rotation and allows the individual to stand correctly. However, injuries to the knee could overstretch the popliteus muscle and cause mobility issues to the knee flexion.



We are going to look at an interesting little muscle called the popliteus. The popliteus attaches to the inner aspect of the top of the tibia, then runs across the back of the knee and links to the femur, which is at the top of the knee. So it's short, it's at quite an angle, and it's quite a strong little muscle.

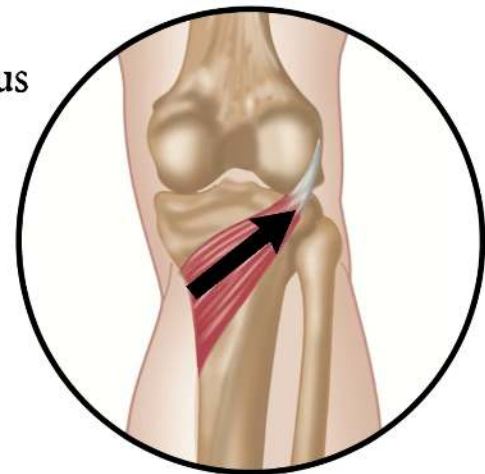
And when it contracts, what it'll do is it'll pull in this direction, and it causes a small rotation of the femur, which is the thigh on the tibia. And this is an interesting movement. If you were sitting here right now, straighten your knee completely, and put your finger on your tibia, which is the lower bone in the knee. Now straighten the knee completely. And there's a last little movement. It's probably the last five degrees as the knee locks completely into place; in other words, it becomes straight.



Knee Pain Associated With Trigger Points

When dealing with knee pain, it could often be a joint disorder like osteoarthritis or a musculoskeletal condition like sciatica pain associated with the knee. These issues could be due to normal factors like constantly sitting down or bending down to lift heavy objects that cause the knees to buckle. However, when the popliteus muscle has been continuously overused from being bent, it can form tiny nodules known as trigger points to cause knee pain. Studies reveal that trigger points on the muscles surrounding the knee are often ignored during a clinical diagnosis. Trigger points cause referred pain to the surrounding muscles, accompanied by various sensory sensations like heaviness, tingling, and hypersensitivity to the popliteus muscle. In "Myofascial Pain and Dysfunction," written by Dr. Travell, M.D.

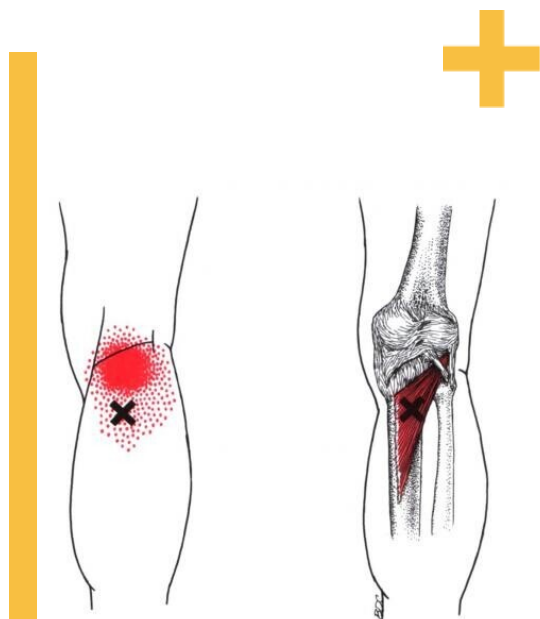
Popliteus



stated that one of the chief complaints that many patients often talk to their doctors about is the pain they feel in the back of their knees when they are in a crouch position. The book also states when normal actions like running or twisting have overloaded the popliteus muscle, it can cause trauma or strain to the popliteus muscle and tear the posterior cruciate ligament to the knees.

Have you been having knee issues that make walking difficult for a long period? Do you feel like your knees are locking up constantly? What about feeling unstable when standing or carrying objects around? These issues that affect the knees are associated with trigger points along the popliteus muscles.

The popliteus muscle is small, located at the back of the knees, and assists with knee flexion. When the popliteus muscle becomes overused, it can cause trigger points to form and cause knee issues. Studies reveal that various issues, like tendon injuries, are associated with repetitive mechanical stresses that can cause degenerative knee lesions. Any trauma or muscle strain can affect the knee's function of flexing and bending without pain for trigger points to form along the popliteus muscles.

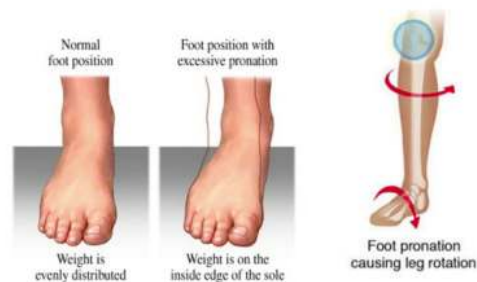


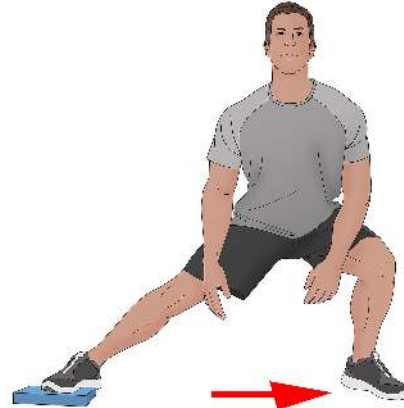
Finding Trigger Points Along The Popliteus Muscle

There's a little rotation in the knee, but then you can stand on this locked knee without using any muscular force. As it contracts, this muscle unlocks the knee, so it'll just undo that little rotation and allow you to bend your knee. So it gets a lot of work, particularly it becomes active as you climb hills or go on long walks. The trigger point occurs right in the center of the popliteus muscle, and the pain you feel is in the back of the knee, just around that trigger point. You notice this pain, especially if you're crouching, walking down a hill, or descending the stairs. There is another problem that can occur with this muscle. And this is not a myofascial problem, but it says the tendon can become strained as it wraps around and attaches to the side of the femur. And it can give you localized pain outside the knee, which is one of the significant causes of a runner's knee. As you run, your foot strikes the ground, and there is pronation of your foot; a twisting movement occurs through the knee. And this muscle will contract each time to reduce the twisting movement. And if you are overpronating, you might get floppy feet, and if there's too much rotation, you may injure that tendon. So runner's knee is something you're okay with as you start, and then as you start running after a certain period, you'll get this intense pain the more you run.

Popliteus

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Managing Knee Pain Through Various Treatments

On the bright side, all is not lost, as various treatments offer ways to manage knee pain associated with trigger points. When it comes to knee pain, many individuals will apply an ice or heat compress to allow the surrounding muscles to relax while reducing the pain and swelling. Other individuals use over-the-counter medicines to eliminate the pain for a few hours. While these work at managing knee pain, various treatments target trigger points and can help improve flexion mobility back to the knees. Studies reveal that muscle stretching on the popliteus muscle contributes to joint position sense to knee joint stability and function. Stretching the popliteus muscles can reduce the pain in the back of the knee while elongating the muscle fibers to manage trigger points from forming again. Other treatments that people can do to avoid trigger points from returning is to avoid walking or running in a lateral sloped area to prevent the knees from locking up. Incorporating these treatments to prevent knee issues and allow the knee to function properly.



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