

# The Active Life

A new regular column by chartered physiotherapist Nicola Bolger



## Treatment for hip pain

**My name is Nicola Bolger and I am a chartered physiotherapist. I recently established Active Life Physiotherapy in Carlow town to provide high-quality assessment, treatment and management of musculoskeletal and sports injuries for all ages. I qualified from Robert Gordon University, Scotland in**

**2009 with a degree in physiotherapy before working with the National Health Service in England for two years. In 2011, I worked in a physiotherapy practice in New Zealand, where I looked after a semi-professional rugby team. While there, I completed a postgraduate certificate in acupuncture and a master's in**

**musculoskeletal physiotherapy.**

**Over the coming weeks I will be writing about common injuries and tips on how best to manage these. Hopefully you will find it informative and helpful. If there is anything particular topic that concerns you, please get in contact.**

DO you suffer from pain on the outside of your hip and does it radiate down your leg? Is this pain exacerbated when you lie on that side or sit with your legs crossed? If it does, it's possible that you are suffering from greater trochanteric pain syndrome (GTPS).

The source of this persistent pain can be from a variety of soft-tissue structures around the hip, with lower back pain and hip osteoarthritis being a predisposing factor. This type of hip pain is most common in people between the ages of 40 to 60 years, with occurrences more likely in females.

The onset of GTPS is usually insidious, but it tends to get worse over time and can be associated with a change in activity levels. It typically presents with persistent pain on the outside of the hip and is aggra-

vated by lying on that hip, prolonged sitting, sitting with legs crossed, climbing stairs, running and other high-impact activities. It's estimated that 50% of cases experience pain radiating down the outside of the leg to the knee. It can be quite a debilitating condition and limits a lot of activities. It also disturbs sleep and in some cases the pain can be worse at night. Most likely there will be point tenderness around the joint on the lateral aspect of the hip.

### TIPS FOR MANAGING HIPS

- See a chartered physiotherapist to get a definite diagnosis and management plan
- Ice massage for pain relief – use an

ice cub or ice pack to massage the lateral aspect of the hip for two to three minutes. Be careful not to burn the skin

- Avoid sitting with legs crossed or knees together and feet apart. Aim to sit with feet and knees parallel and in line with the hips
- Avoid sitting in a chair where your knees are higher than your hips
- When climbing stairs, aim to keep your feet in line with or wider than the hips
- At night, aim to sleep on the non-painful side with the top leg supported to ensure the knee is in line with the hip. This can be achieved by putting pillows between the knees
- Do not stretch the lateral aspect of leg/iliotibial band region. Instead, try other

soft-tissue techniques to release the structures around the sore area, such as massage, trigger-point release with a foam roller or ball

- Another way to release soft-tissue structures around the hip is acupuncture. You first need to be assessed as to whether this is appropriate
- Seek advice regarding an appropriate exercise programme to strengthen the muscles around the hip and the lower limb and a graduated exercise programme to return to performance.

You can contact Active Life Physiotherapy at Carlow Gateway Business Centre, Athy Road, Carlow, tel: 059 9116939, email [info@activelifephysiotherapy.ie](mailto:info@activelifephysiotherapy.ie).