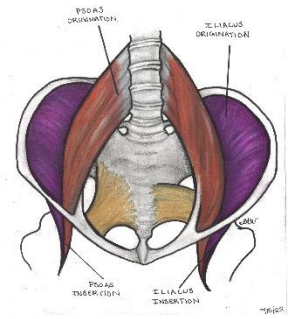
Welcome to the April edition of *Flexible Living with Julie Donnelly*. It's hard to believe that it's already April! It's a beautiful month here in Florida as the rains haven't started yet and there isn't any humidity. A great time to go out and ride your bike or walk along the beach. I think it's also a beautiful month everywhere else in the USA as the spring flowers start to bloom.

In this month's newsletter we will be discussing the psoas and iliacus muscles and how they can contribute to low back pain. Anyone who has come to my office with low back pain, hip/groin/knee pain, or sciatica is familiar with these two muscles being the root cause of all these conditions.

There is more to the story of each of these conditions, and I have covered them thoroughly in previous newsletters, and in each of my books. Today I want to really explain the "why" of how a muscle in the front of your body plays such havoc with the back of your body.

Anatomy of the Psoas and Iliacus Muscles



The psoas muscle originates on the FRONT side of the lumbar vertebrae and the iliacus originates on the inside curve of your pelvis. They join together very close to your pubic bone and become one muscle group called the iliopsoas muscle group, and they play a critical role in hip and core stability.

The iliopsoas muscle group runs together to where it attaches on the top/inside of your thigh bone.

The Role of the Psoas and Iliacus Muscles

The psoas muscles pulls you forward so you can bend over, and the iliacus muscle lifts your leg up to take a step. Together they are responsible for flexing <u>your</u> hip joint, which is important for movements such as walking, running, climbing stairs and sitting down. Additionally, these muscles play a vital role in maintaining good posture and providing stability to the pelvis and lower back. In fact, the only time they are not contracted is when you are standing straight and still.

When these muscles are tight or weakened, they can cause significant problems, including:

*low back pain
*groin pain
*hip pain
*knee pain
*sciatica

How the Psoas and Iliacus Muscles Cause Low Back Pain

When the psoas muscle becomes tight from repetitive use, or overactive, it can pull on the lumbar spine. An analogy I use frequently is; just as pulling your hair hard can hurt your skull, the psoas muscle pulling hard on the *front* of your lumbar spine will cause the bones to hurt.

The pressure causes excessive curvature of the lower back. This excessive curvature can cause compression of the lumbar discs and joints, leading to pain and discomfort.

Since your iliacus muscle originates on the inside curve of your pelvis (hip), when it is tight it is common for a person to have hip pain that feels like it's deep inside the hip. And it IS deep inside the hip, so much so that you can't get your fingers in more than ¼ of an inch to press on the muscle. Fortunately, when you come in to the office I can get far into the muscle and release the deep spasms that are causing the problems.

Additionally, since they merge together and insert into your thigh bone, tight psoas and iliacus muscles can cause imbalances in the pelvis, leading to asymmetrical movement patterns that can contribute to low back pain and a lot more!

Conversely, weak psoas and iliacus muscles can also cause low back pain. When these muscles are weak, they are unable to provide adequate stability to the pelvis and lumbar spine, leading to excessive movement and strain on the lower back muscles. This strain can lead to muscle imbalances and compensations, which can ultimately cause low back pain.

How Tension in the Psoas and Iliacus Muscles Cause the Symptoms of Arthritis, Bursitis, and any other "itis."

Think of this situation: the muscles are tight and pulling hard on the bones. You are trying to move in the opposite direction, but the muscles are preventing you from moving in that direction. The more you try, the more the bones hurt.

In fact, as the tight muscles pull on the bones, they can actually start to tear the muscles &/or tendons away from the bone. The body sees this as a "MAYDAY," an emergency distress signal. The pressure on the bones first causes an inflammation to occur, and you are in danger of the muscle severing either from the tendon, or from the bone. The body sends out the rescue squad of bone cells to hang on to the tendon.

Now you have :

- pain when you try to move,
- inflammation ("itis") at the site of the insertion
- and the joint is stiff, possibly even pulled out of normal alignment.
- …you have all the signs of arthritis or bursitis.

You may be given strong drugs that can have serious side-effects, when all that's wrong is the muscles are tight and preventing the bones/joints from moving smoothly.

But, don't stretch yet! It can cause the problem to get worse!

Everyone thinks about stretching, but when a muscle is tied up in knots, you definitely don't want to try to stretch it. You can make it much worse, or you may even tear the fibers.

You may have already heard the analogy I use to explain why stretching can hurt the muscles.

If you took a 12" length of rope and tied enough knots in it to make it 10", and then you stretched it back to 12" again, what did you do? You made the knots tighter, and you overstretched the fibers that are not in the knot. And in the body, both ends of this rope (muscle) are attached to a bone &/or a joint!

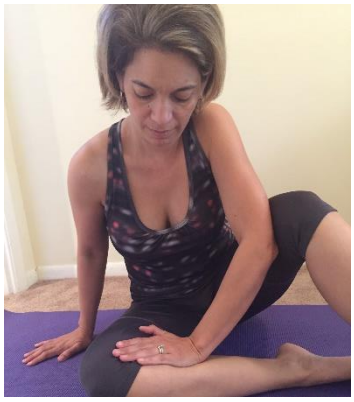
First you need to untie the knots -- *then* you can stretch safely.

You can go on YouTube University and find lots of ways to stretch, but you'll be hard-pressed to find anything that tells you how to untie the knots.

So, I'll tell you.

How to Find the Knots in the Iliopsoas and Untie Them Safely

As I said before, you can't really get into either the iliacus or psoas muscles that are deep in your trunk, but you can reach them where they insert into the inside of your thigh bone.



Sit as shown in this picture.

Turn your hand as shown, but come all the way up to the top of your leg, right where your leg attaches to your trunk, just to the outside of your pubic bone

You may even find it easier to press into the muscles with your fingertips, still keeping your hand turned as shown in this picture.

When you find a "hot spot" you are pressing onto the spasm on the iliopsoas

What to Do Next To Stop Pain FAST!

I've discovered a LOT of ways to eliminate pain, and I've been doing it for my clients for almost 35 years. However, it was frustrating that I could only reach clients who lived near my office.

When I started getting my own injuries, and then I needed to create self-treatments when I couldn't get help from any of the professionals I went to during that time. I finally worked it out, and that's the basis for each of my books and video programs.

In the case of low back pain, hip/groin/knee pain, and sciatica, I suggest getting my book: *The 15 Minute Back Pain Solution.* **G, please link book title to: https://julstromethod.com/shop/**

You CAN find, and successfully self-treat the muscle spasms (knots) that cause pain!

Wishing you well,

PS: Have you watched my TED talk: *The Pain Question No One is Asking*? If not, go to YouTube and enter: Julie Donnelly, Pain and I'll pop up. I think it's really interesting. If you also think it's interesting, please share it so I'll get invited back to go further into why muscles cause pain.