

Be specific with exercise

Question: I have been working out my legs and trying to strengthen my previously injured hamstring yet can't seem to get them to be strong again. What exercise would you suggest?

Answer: Understanding the mechanics and function of your muscle structure and anatomy is essential in providing the quickest and most effective rehabilitation to one specific area of injury. First, realize that one muscle alone is never the concern. Every muscle has a synergistic muscle (one that assists it in the same function or movement) and an antagonistic muscle (one that opposes its function or movement). You don't always have to work directly on the damaged muscle to assist it. You can strengthen co-synergistic muscles or stretch or weaken antagonistic muscles and have the same effect. An example of this in the hamstring muscles in the back of the leg, would be to strengthen the adductor and /or abductor muscles on the inner and outer leg which are synergistic, or tone down the quadriceps muscles on the front of the leg which are antagonistic.

Learn which exercises and equipment isolate these different muscle groups. Read, educate yourself or work with an experienced trainer. The more you understand your goal and can visualize the final outcome the more successful you will be in accomplishing that goal. Basic rules that always apply to muscle stretching and strengthening are to never bob or jolt the muscle, slowly move into a stretch, pain means stop, and don't over tax a healing muscle when strengthening. Breathe upon exertion and be conscious of your breathing when

working out. Muscle requires oxygen to function and heal. Finally, my personal number one bit of advice for exercise and muscle repair, is to drink plenty of water. Muscle is composed of 80-percent water and will not heal without it.

Quote of the week: *“Sports don’t build character. They reveal it.”* - Heywood Braun