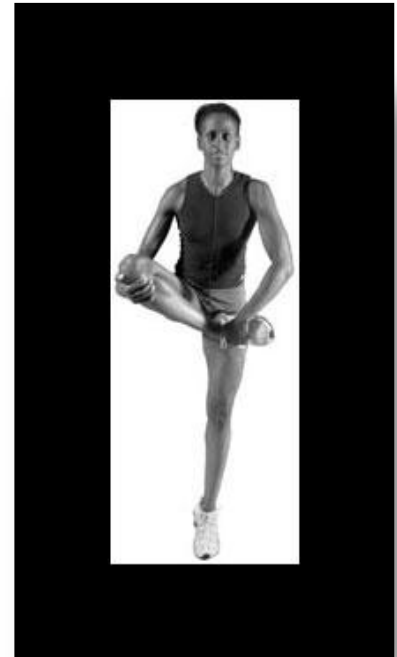
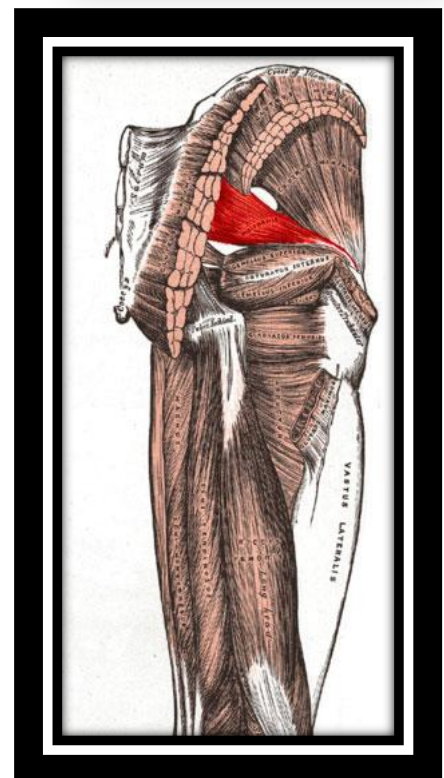


## A Common Mistake in Stretching the Hip “Piriformis” Muscle

The Piriformis or “Butt” stretch is often used in many fitness and rehabilitation routines. Today we are going to review a common mistake when trying to stretch the hip piriformis muscle. If you make this one correction, not only will you increase your stretch you will make it much more effective



The supine piriformis stretch as shown above is in the “leg cradle position”. The same position can be seen in this standing hip stretch that is used in many dynamic warm-ups. Many people stretch this way but if you look at the piriformis muscle attachments (the red muscle to the right), as you flex your hip or bring your knee up towards your shoulder, if the knee is going out then this muscle is not being stretched. You are stretching the hip capsule. If you do this aggressively and many athletes do, you can actually pre-dispose yourself to hip impingement or pinching.



## **The Correct Way to Stretch the Piriformis**

Because the piriformis, like all muscles, functions in all three planes of motion, it must be stretched in all three planes of motion in order to be lengthened effectively. If we look at the leg cradle we can clearly see that the hip being stretched is in flexion, external rotation, and abduction.

As explained above, the piriformis contributes to hip abduction and therefore is shortened in that position. This is the reason why the leg cradle does not stretch the piriformis effectively.



Step 1: Assume a quadrupedal (all fours) position with your right ankle crossed over the back of your left knee as shown above.

Step 2: Place your right hand out to the side.

In order to effectively stretch the piriformis as an internal rotator (above 60 degrees of hip flexion) we need to place the hip into flexion, external rotation and adduction. You will see this occur in the protocol below. Note: the below sequence displays how to stretch the right hip. Reverse for the left hip.



Step 3: Shift your hips and shoulders toward the right until you feel the stretch.



Be sure to move your pelvis and shoulders together in rhythm while avoiding any lateral flexion or rotation at the pelvis and/or trunk. This helps you prevent any substitution patterns (such as lumbar flexion or rounding of your back which is commonly seen in the supine version) and build some awareness of spinal stability. This stretch can be performed dynamically by moving the hips back and forth every one or two seconds, or it can become a static stretch by holding the position for 20 to 60 seconds or more.

Attention to details is important in all aspects of sports and life. Paying attention to his one detail about how to effectively stretch your piriformis or “butt” muscle will help increase your flexibility. Flexibility is one of the keys that is often overlooked in total athletic development. Good Luck!!

\*\*Remember to:

- 1) Always plan ahead for what you are going to eat
- 2) Obtain adequate amounts of protein
- 3) Work on your flexibility and
- 4) Supplement your diet with a fish oil and multivitamin

Let me know if I can help. Email me [architectsports@gmail.com](mailto:architectsports@gmail.com)

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