



WHAT IS A THIGH CONTUSION?

A thigh contusion, otherwise known as a 'corked thigh, charley horse or dead leg' is an injury from a severe blow to the quadriceps muscle group on the front of the femur (thigh bone).

INJURY FACTS:

A thigh contusion is an injury that usually occurs in contact sports. The mechanism normally involves a player's body contacting the thigh of another's. The compressive force causes a disruption to the quadriceps muscle fibres, resulting in haemorrhage and inflammation. The pressure within the muscle compartments prevents the fluid from releasing, creating an area of increased tension and often a palpable lump.

DIAGNOSIS:

During the examination the physiotherapist will take a subjective history reviewing what happened at the time of injury. Objective findings often include quadriceps weakness, pain when bringing the heel toward the buttocks, tenderness on palpation of the quadriceps, limp when walking and bruising/swelling on observation.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS:

- Tightness in the thigh muscle
- Pain when bending the knee
- Swelling or bruising on the thigh sometimes moving into the knee
- 'dead leg' sensation
- Pain with walking and running

PHYSIOTHERAPY TREATMENT OPTIONS:

- Ultrasound
- Ice massage
- Massage techniques
- Taping
- Muscle energy techniques
- Movement therapy
- Quadriceps stretching and strengthening programs
- Compression bandaging
- Exercise bike mobility

COMPLICATIONS:

In the case of really bad thigh contusions the original haematoma can calcify laying down bone in the muscle compartments that is known as myositis ossificans. This can cause long lasting problems including leg stiffness, weakness and pain, with healing taking anywhere from 8-52 weeks. Myositis ossificans often occurs with poor management of the original condition.

HELPFUL HINTS:

- Immediately following the injury, strap an ice pack to the painful area with the knee bent as far as possible
- Don't use heat, alcohol, running or direct massage during the first 48 hours
- Seek early treatment from a physiotherapist

