

## ***HAMSTRING LENGTHENING***

### **Why does my child need this surgery?**

Spasticity causes the hamstring (behind the knee) muscles to become tight. As the child grows, this results in a crouched gait for children who walk. Children who spend most of their waking hours sitting, tend to also have difficulty with these muscles becoming contracted, causing the child to be unable to straighten their knees when they lie down. A hunched posture in sitting is often caused by tight hamstring. Occasionally, tight hamstring are a contributor to hip instability.



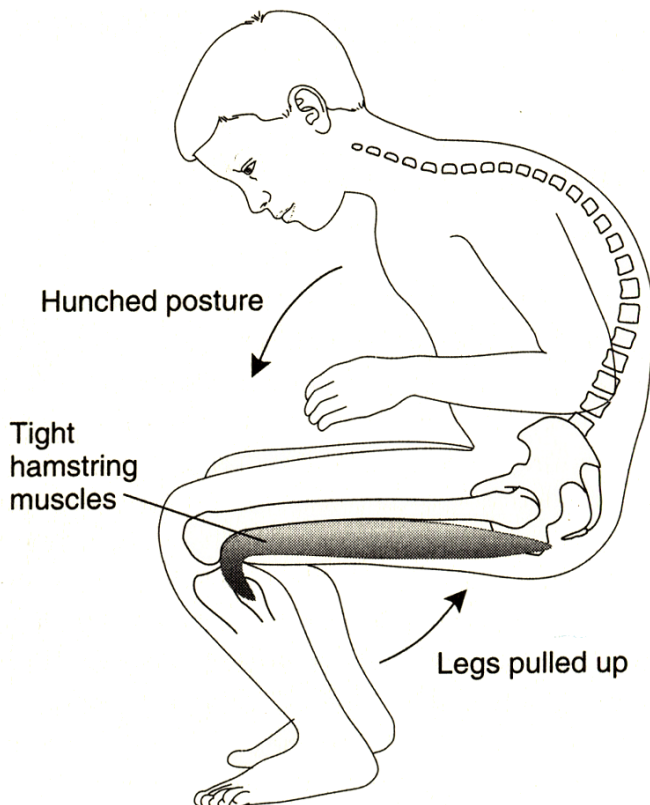
### **What does the surgery involve?**

The surgery involves either cutting the tendinous part of the muscle and allowing it stretch out (this is the most common) or a "Z" cut, sliding the ends apart and suturing them into a lengthened position.

### **What are the incisions like?**

The incisions will either be located behind the knee or behind the buttock. The children who are walking with a crouched gait will typically have incisions behind the knee. Children who are having lengthening because of seating issues may have incisions either behind the knee or behind the buttocks, depending upon the child's particular issues.

Each of these incisions is approximately two inches in length.



## **What happens immediately after surgery?**

Your child will be placed in a knee immobilizer. This is a removable foam splint with metal stays. It is designed to keep the knee extended so that the hamstrings are stretched. If this is the child's only surgery, he will probably stay in the hospital one night.



## **Will my child be able to walk during this time?**

Yes, although a walker or crutches may be needed temporarily.

## **Will my child be able to ride in the car with the immobilizers?**

Yes. When your child is in the car, you may remove the immobilizers and allow the knees to bend. These periods of time without the immobilizers will not cause any problem.

## **How long will the immobilizers be on?**

They are typically worn for two hours on and two hours off, initially. After a period of time determined by the physician, the schedule changes to nighttime only wear and eventually, they may be discontinued.

## **Will my child have pain?**

Yes. However, the pain will be controlled with pain relievers and muscle relaxants. If, after your child returns home, you feel that he/she is having inappropriate pain or side effects from the medications, please call the office.

## **Will my child need physical therapy?**

Yes. The therapists will work with your child in the hospital and you will be given a prescription for therapy when you are discharged. The therapy will focus on stretching, strengthening and ambulation training.

The social worker will help with arranging for therapy. However, individual insurance coverage will often dictate what therapy is possible. It is very helpful for families to inquire about their coverage prior to surgery in order to facilitate the process of obtaining what is needed for their child.

## **When will my child need to return to see the doctor?**

The typical post-operative visit is in four weeks.

## **When may my child return to school?**

This is variable. Most children are comfortable enough to return to school after two weeks. If the child has had other procedures done at the same time, it may take longer for him/her to feel comfortable. The additional factors involved in returning are the length of the bus ride and the ability of the school to accommodate the child.

## **How long will it be until my child has completely recovered?**

This varies with the child and depends also on whether the child has had additional procedures. In general, it may take as long as three to six months.

## **Will this surgery ever need to be repeated?**

Maybe. If the child is young when the hamstrings need to be lengthened, there is a significant possibility that growth during adolescence will necessitate a repeat lengthening.

## **Are there any complications associated with this surgery?**

Infections can occur. However, they are usually minor and do not delay recovery.

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