

## Let's Talk About...

# Thigh tendon surgery (hamstring lengthening)

Your child may have a neurologic (nerve) or muscle problem causing a tight hamstring (large muscle in the back of the thigh). These problems can make walking hard and cause poor posture and trouble sitting. To correct them, your child may need hamstring lengthening surgery.

## What happens during hamstring lengthening surgery?

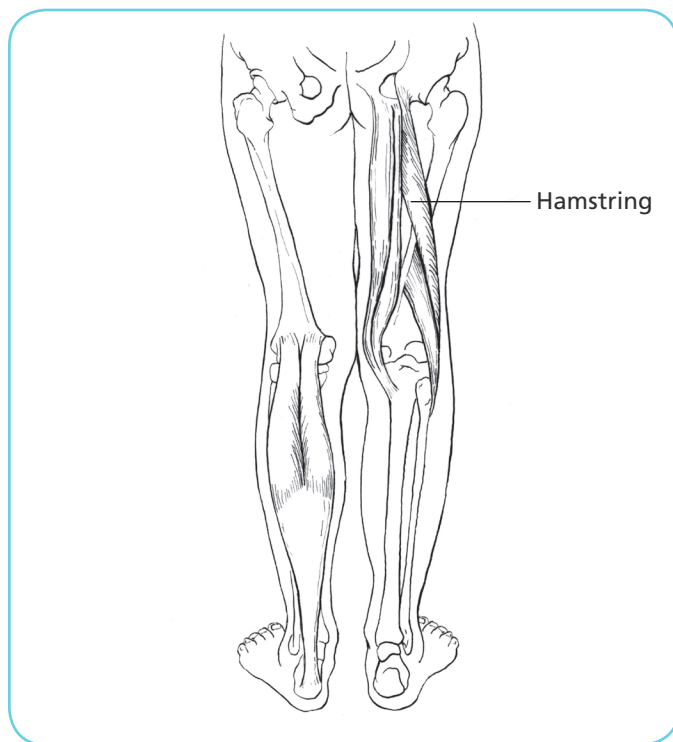
During this surgery, the surgeon makes a small opening on the back of the thigh and lengthens the hamstring muscle so it can begin to stretch out. Your child usually stays in the hospital overnight. Once you take your child home, call the Primary Children's Hospital orthopedic clinic at 801.662.5600 to make a follow-up appointment.

## When can my child eat after surgery?

After your child wakes up from surgery, they can drink clear liquids, including water, apple juice, Pedialyte, Gatorade, ice pops, and plain gelatin. Most babies can take a bottle or breastfeed. Your child may have a normal diet after they leave the hospital. Start feeding them soft, easily digested foods, and avoid high-fat or greasy foods like hamburgers and pizza for 24 hours after surgery.

## What should I do about nausea and vomiting?

Sedation (medicine to put your child to sleep during surgery), car motion, or pain medicine can make your child feel nauseated (sick to their stomach) or vomit. This can last 24 hours after surgery.



To control nausea:

- Encourage your child to lie still and try not to move
- Give them clear liquids and slowly start with normal foods until they feel better

If your child vomits, let their stomach settle for 30 to 60 minutes, and then try clear liquids. It's important for your child to drink plenty of liquids after surgery to avoid dehydration [dee-hi-DRAY-shun], or not enough fluid in the body. However, your child may not eat solid foods for a day or two.

**If your child vomits all the time or the vomiting continues for several hours, call their healthcare provider.**

## What are the signs of dehydration?

After surgery, your child may be dehydrated. Signs of dehydration include:

- Dark yellow urine (pee)
- Dry mouth (no spit)
- Chapped lips
- Soft spot on a baby's head sinking in

If you notice any of these signs, give your child more to drink. They should urinate (pee) normally within 24 hours after surgery. A baby should have 6 to 8 wet diapers in a 24-hour period, and an older child should urinate every 3 to 4 hours.

## How can I help my child manage pain?

To help your child manage pain after surgery:

- Raise your child's affected leg on pillows for at least the first 24 hours to limit swelling.
- Have your child wiggle their toes every once in a while.
- Put an ice pack on your child's surgery site for the first 24 to 48 hours to decrease pain and swelling.
- Have them sit in a reclined position instead of fully upright to relax the hamstrings.

Comfort your child and listen to their concerns. An older child can tell you about their pain. A younger or developmentally delayed child in pain may moan, whimper, make a face of pain, cry, be irritable, or not want to eat or sleep.

## When should I give my child pain medicine?

Give your child pain medicine as their doctor ordered it. Taking the medicine with food or drink can decrease the chance of nausea. Your child's doctor may suggest acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil) for pain. They may also prescribe an oral opioid [OH-pee-oid]. **Some oral opioids have acetaminophen in them, so don't give your child more acetaminophen if they're taking a stronger medicine.**

## How should I care for the dressing?

Keep the dressing on your child's foot or leg clean and dry. Your child will also have a knee immobilizer (brace), which helps the hamstring heal by keeping the leg straight. Your child's doctor will tell you how often to keep the immobilizer in place. They will also tell you when the dressing can come off.

## How much drainage is normal?

A small amount of drainage is normal. It should be thin and pink or clear. If you notice bright-red blood, a lot of drainage, or drainage that is green or lasts more than a couple of days, call your child's doctor.

## When can my child take a bath or shower?

Once the dressing is gone, your child may shower as instructed by their doctor. Your child should not take a bath, sit in a hot tub, or swim for 2 weeks. Use a warm washcloth and soap to clean your child's body until they can shower. The Steri-Strips (like butterfly bandages) over your child's surgery site will fall off as the wound heals.

## How active can my child be?

Limit your child's activity for the first 24 to 48 hours. They can put weight on their leg or foot as they can handle it. A physical therapist may also teach your child how to use crutches. Your child's surgeon will tell you which sports and gym activities they should avoid for a while.

## What is normal behavior after surgery?

It is normal for your child to have behavior changes after surgery. They may wet the bed, suck their thumb, become angry easily, or change their sleep and eating patterns. Comfort your child, help them feel safe, and be patient to help reduce these changes. Call your child's doctor if the behavior changes last longer than 3 to 4 weeks.

## How do I call my child’s doctor?

Call the orthopedic office at 801.662.5600 or same-day surgery at 801.662.2855. If it’s after business hours, call the Primary Children’s Hospital operator at 801.662.1000 and ask for the on-call orthopedic resident.

## When should I call my child’s doctor?

You should call your child’s doctor if your child has:

- A temperature higher than 101°F (38°C)
- Increased drainage from the wound or drainage that lasts more than 3 to 4 days
- Increased swelling
- Bleeding
- Uncontrolled pain
- Numb fingers or toes
- Signs of dehydration (dry mouth, less than 6 to 8 wet diapers per day, or lack of tears)
- Excessive diarrhea or constipation

**If your child has chest pain or trouble breathing, immediately call 911 or take them to the emergency room.**

### Questions for my child’s doctor

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