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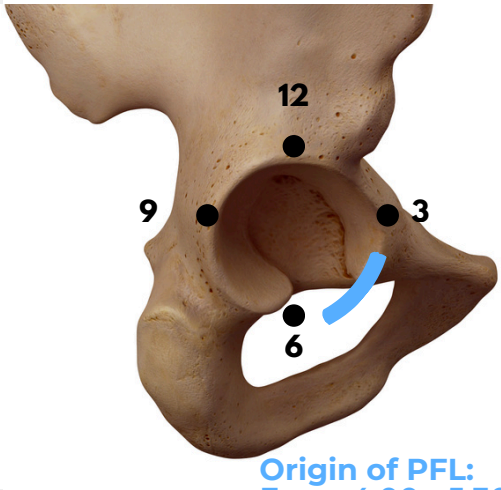
HIP FACTS FROM THE LITERATURE #88

THE PUBOFEMORAL LIGAMENT REINFORCES THE ANTERIOR-INFERIOR REGION OF THE HIP CAPSULE



Origin of PFL:
From 4.00 - 5.30 on the acetabular clock

PUBOFEMORAL LIGAMENT (PFL)
Relatively lax in neutral or flexion
Resists hyperextension & ABD
Resists IR in hip flexion & ABD
Key restraint to anterior-inferior translation of the femoral head in hip EXT & ABD

Originates from iliopubic eminence, obturator crest & distally blends with the joint capsule (medially) and iliofemoral ligament (laterally)

ABD: Abduction; IR: Internal Rotation; EXT: Extension; CSA: Cross Sectional Area;

OTHER PFL FACTS:

- *Smallest capsular ligament*
- *Cross-sectional area: ≈ 15 mm^2*
- *The iliopsoas tendon passes directly anterior to the PFL*
- *Proprioceptive function*

The pubofemoral ligament reinforces a relatively thin area of the capsule. It acts as a sling beneath the femoral head in hip extension and also in abduction. This ligament will come under strain in a deep abducted sumosquat, a side lunge or a change-of-direction manoeuvre. Keep this in mind if your patient sustained a hip injury in one of these tasks and/or has pain associated with such movements. Anterior-inferior hip instability is becoming increasing recognised in recent years and commonly presents with pain in hip abduction or flexion.

As the pubofemoral ligament and the area of underlying capsule are both relatively thin compared with the strong anterior capsule and iliofemoral ligament, lower forces may result in overload or injury. This may result in subsequent injury to the next layer of defence in these positions - the ligamentum teres.

The iliopsoas, the obturator externus and the pectineus muscles appear best placed to provide support for this region. If your patient presents with symptoms suggestive of injury or overload of these muscles, consider what may be happening in the underlying joint structures.

Xu W, Ghaziani AO, Khanduja V, et al. Anatomy, biomechanics and function of the hip capsule: A narrative review from a surgeons perspective. Clin Biomech (Bristol). 2025 Jul;127:106588.