You might think that if you have pain in the hip area, that it must be coming from inside the hip. However, “hip pain” can come from many different areas including the spine, muscles, bursas, or nerves. Too often we see patients get hip surgeries when their pain is really coming from somewhere else.

The spine and nerves are infamous for referring pain elsewhere. This means that if a portion of your low back (like a spinal nerve) is irritated, you may or may not feel it in your back, but you may feel it in your hip, thigh, knee, leg, ankle, or foot.

**Spine/Nerves**

Muscles can develop trigger points (TPs) which are areas that are painful and weak. These TPs are often felt as “knots” or bands that when pressed, cause pain elsewhere.

**Bursas**

The low back muscles can develop trigger points that refer pain to the hip. These are often found in the muscles of the upper part of the lower back (T12-L2) or the quadratus lumborum muscle.

**Muscles**

Trigger points in the muscles around the hip (hip girdle) often cause pain in this hip. Tight areas in the piriformis muscle can cause the sciatic nerve to get entrapped, leading to symptoms down the leg as well.

**Hip Joint**

Problems like arthritis in the hip joint can obviously cause hip pain. When pain is from the joint itself, it’s often felt in the groin area. Before any surgery is planned in the hip, a diagnostic numbing injection should be performed to confirm the pain is really originating there.

The iliospous bursa is a lubricating sac in the front of the hip that can cause groin or front of hip pain. It gets swollen when biomechanical problems develop within the iliospous muscle.

The trochanteric bursa is a lubricating sac on the side of the hip. With abnormal hip biomechanics it can become swollen and painful, causing pain in the side of the hip. This is a common problem in patients who have unstable sacro-iliac (SI) joints.

Bursas are lubricating sacs that allow smooth movement when tendons cross over hard areas. There are a number around the hip that can become chronically swollen.

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The labrum is the lip of the socket of the ball and socket joint of the hip. Since this structure helps to stabilize the hip joint, a tear can cause hip instability. Labral injuries happen through trauma or “wear and tear”. Pain in the groin area is often felt with certain movements.

The iliopsoas bursa is a lubricating sac in the front of the hip. When pressure is applied to this small joint, it can cause pain.

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