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## Understanding Hip Pain and Leg Numbness: A Self-Care Guide

Pain that starts in the hip and travels down the side or back of the leg is a common problem. While this pattern can sometimes be related to nerve compression in the spine, it's often caused by trigger points in the muscles of the hip and leg. Even when there is a genuine spine issue, addressing these muscle trigger points can provide significant relief.

When dealing with hip and leg pain, focus on these main areas: the center and outer edge of your buttock, the front corner of your hip (where the coin pocket is on jeans), the side of your outer thigh, and your low back (a little further out from your spine, between your lowest rib and the top of your pelvis).

Remember, numbness in your foot could be caused by nerve compression at various points between the foot and your low back. After checking the hip, low back and thigh, look for points along the outside of the calf, the back of the calf, and along the top, side and bottom of the foot.

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## The Connection Between Trigger Points and Acupuncture

Trigger points are small, sensitive areas in your muscles that can cause pain both at the point itself and in other areas of your body (referred pain). These points often correspond with traditional acupuncture points, which isn't surprising given our growing understanding of how the body's myofascial (muscle and connective tissue) system overlaps with traditional acupuncture meridians. When you apply pressure to these points, you stimulate the same nerve fibers that respond to acupuncture needles, making self-massage a powerful tool for home care.

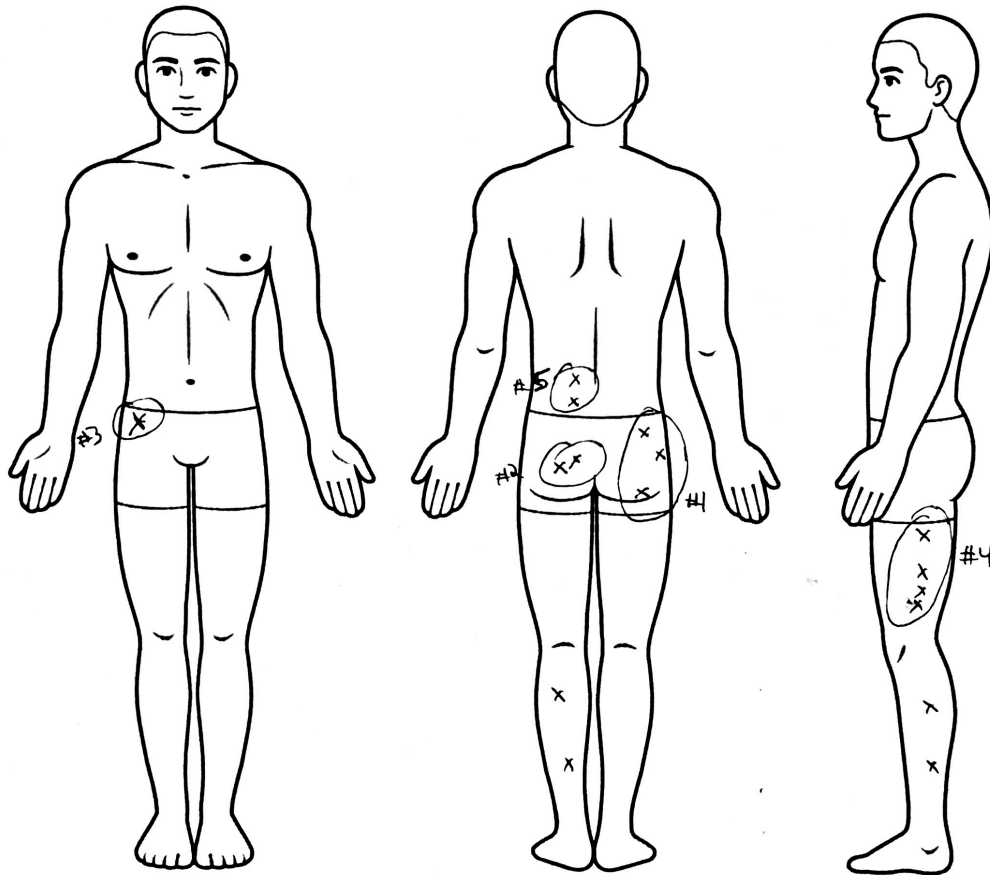
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## Getting Started with Self-Massage

The key to effective self-massage is gentle, sustained pressure rather than aggressive rubbing. You'll need a massage ball - while a tennis ball works to start, I recommend the Yoga Tune Up therapy balls for their durability and perfect density. When working on a point:

- Start with light pressure and gradually increase as the tissue releases
- If you find yourself holding your breath, that's a sign you're using too much pressure
- Spend no more than a couple of minutes on each area.
- Repeat every 2-3 days
- If you experience any nerve sensations (tingling, numbness, or sharp pain), adjust the position of the ball

See the illustration below for help locating common trigger points. There are also links to some helpful videos.



#1 Gluteal Muscles

#2 Piriformis

#3 TFL—Find the bony point at the front of your hip and move just slightly to the outside. Use a ball against the wall and lean into it with adjustable pressure.

#4 Vastus Lateralis—Use a ball against the wall to work the length of the outer thigh from hip to knee, pausing on any tender spots

#5 Quadratus Lumborum

Lower Leg Points:

Try using the back of your opposite knee to massage your calf, or alternatively a Knobble.

For the outside of the leg, use a Knobble, or scrape down the side of the leg with a guasha tool or handle of a long utensil.

Points on the bottom of the foot: Check for tender points on the top, side, and bottom of your foot. Use a small, firm ball (like a rubber bouncy ball) on the bottom of the foot and supported fingers or a Knobble for the top and sides.