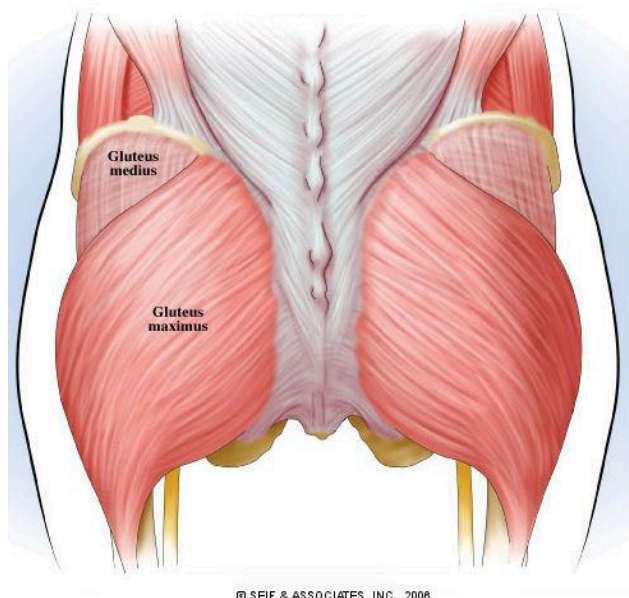


Gluteus Medius: Small but Mighty

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This is the story of how a very small muscle did some very big things for my yoga practice. If you've been in class with me lately, you may have noticed that I have become a one-gal glute med cheering section. That's because this little muscle helped me find relief from my nagging hip pain, stabilized my inversions and single leg balancing poses, protects my hamstring attachments, and even makes my pigeon pose more effective!

So, what is it?

The glute med (say GLOOT MEED) is a relatively small muscle that lives at the top of the outer hip, about where the hip and thigh meet. Its job is hip extension, or wrapping the outer hips back. Unfortunately, because it is so small, the larger and stronger surrounding muscles tend to override its function. As a result, it can become smaller and weaker and less able to stabilize the pelvis.

How does it work?



If you're having trouble locating and activating the glute med, you're not alone. I've put together this handy guide to discovering your glute med:

Let's start by looking at utkatasana, or chair pose. Look closely at Natalie's knees – see how they knock in a little? Some manual glute med activation will help.

To locate and stimulate activation of the muscle manually, place your hands at your hip creases with your thumbs wrapping back to the top of the upper thigh, almost at your butt. Check to make sure your hands are not at the top of the pelvis, but lower, so your index fingers





line the crease where the hip and thigh meet. Then use your thumbs pressing IN and BACK to activate the wrapping back action of the magical glute med.

See how Natalie's knees are now tracking over the middle toes? That's a great way to tell that you've got that glute med working!

I spent a lot of time manually activating this muscle in my practice, and after a few months of doing so, I was able to start getting it to work without having to use my hands, just like learning to engage the biceps or quadriceps!

Try this out next time you're on your mat! Use your hands to stimulate the muscle, and watch the knee track open so you know it's working! Make sure to keep your feet parallel, and remember that it's easiest to find this action with a bent knee, then hold the engagement as you start to straighten the leg. Be sure to activate both sides of the outer hips in asymmetrical poses – it will help to align the legs and pelvis!

See for yourself how it affects these poses:

* triangle * pyramid * warrior two * half moon * revolved lunge * warrior three* pigeon pose * handstand *