

# PREVALENCE OF HAMSTRING TIGHTNESS IN SCHOOL CHILDREN IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

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## Abstract

**ABSTRACT BACKGROUND:** Back pain amongst children is on the rise exponentially. Hamstring tightness is known to have cause/effect relationship with low back pain. Presence of hamstring tightness is also associated with increase in risk of muscular strains. The purpose of this study was to assess the prevalence of hamstring tightness in school going children in the United Arab Emirates. To our knowledge, this is the first such reported study in the Middle East. **METHODS:** All children of a school based in Dubai, UAE from grade 2 to grade 10 aged 7-15 years were assessed by a team of 5 physiotherapists. Hamstring tightness was evaluated by standard active knee extension [AKE] test in the school medical department. A total of 317 children were assessed [634 limbs] by two observers and any inability to actively extend the knee completely while the hip being at 90-degree flexion was considered as hamstring tightness. **RESULTS:** Out of 317 subjects, 287 [90.53%] were found to have at least some hamstring tightness. There was a statistically significant difference between genders: boys showing more prevalence. All age groups across the school showed similar pattern. This may be the highest ever recorded prevalence of hamstring tightness in school children in any reported study in English literature. **CONCLUSION:** An alarming proportion of children in a Dubai based school have hamstring tightness. Wider studies with larger numbers should be undertaken so as to ascertain if this is in some way related to lack of active lifestyle in the UAE where gadget-dependency of younger generation as well as prolonged sitting might be a causative factor. Whether such high prevalence is pathological or physiological also needs to be addressed. School authorities and parents in UAE should engage the children in regular stretching programs.

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