

Soothe sore muscles after exercise



Exercise can make you feel great. But after a hard workout, sore muscles can be uncomfortable. A little soreness is normal and healthy, especially after trying a new activity or pushing yourself a little harder.

Don't let post-exercise pain get you down! You can get through it and reach a new level of fitness with a few tips:

- **Warm up.** Don't jump right into exercise with cold muscles. Doing a lighter or slower version of your workout first will get muscles warm and increase blood flow. This can help avoid injury too.
- **Cool down and stretch.** Don't stop exercise abruptly. Instead, slow down your activity until your heart rate feels normal and you can talk easily. After you've exercised, stretch! This is the perfect time to increase flexibility and help lower the chance of soreness.
- **Drink water.** It helps keep your joints and muscles hydrated and prevents cramps. Drink before, during and after your workout.
- **Give muscles a break.** Give muscles about two days to rest and heal before you exercise them again. For instance, work leg muscles one day and arms the next. Don't do the same exercise day after day. Muscles need about 48 hours to repair and heal.
- **Be sure you're doing it right.** If you're new to certain exercises, don't be afraid to ask someone who can help! Ask a fitness expert or personal trainer or watch videos. Exercise machines and routines can cause injuries if they're not done properly.
- **Don't push too hard.** It's easy to get caught up in a new exercise routine. You may want to get into shape as quickly as possible. But doing too much too quickly can mean lots of soreness and even an injury. If you think your exercise routine is too easy, increase the time or intensity slowly. Always ask your doctor about safe exercises you can do if you have any health conditions.



Listen to your body!

A lot of soreness or pain isn't necessary or normal. If you think you have a strained or sprained muscle, try RICE:

REST:

Don't use the sore muscles, if possible.

ICE:

Apply ice packs to the problem area for a few minutes at a time.

COMPRESSION:

Use sports bandages or wraps.

ELEVATION:

Raise the affected body part, such as a foot, up above your heart for two to three hours each day.

See a doctor if the pain is extreme, gets worse or doesn't go away after a week.

Source: American Academy of Family Physicians