

MUSCLE SORENESS



Basic Crafts Workers Compensation Trust

265 Hegenberger Road, Suite 240

Oakland, CA 94621

(510) 568-5920, (510) 568-5279 Fax

Sore Muscles

Muscle soreness can be caused by any number of things: using your muscles in ways you are not used to will leave them sore for a day or two. Maybe you rode your bike for the first time in a long time over the weekend, or you finally made it back to the gym and lifted some weights. Either way, those muscles got the work-out that they were missing, and now they're sore, but you still have work to do. How do you keep moving forward?

Keep those muscles engaged. The soreness will fade with exercise and moderate repetition, but in the mean time, take the edge off by alternating heat and cold on the sore places.



Lead Off With Cold

To relieve pain associated with sprains and strains, it's usually best to apply a cold compress for about 20 minutes at a time every four to six hours over the first few days. Cold reduces swelling and inflammation and relieves pain. For a cold compress, use a cold pack, a plastic bag filled with ice or a bag of frozen vegetables. Remember to wrap any of these items in a dry cloth or towel to help prevent frostbite.

Follow Up With Heat

Start using heat after the pain and swelling have decreased, usually two to three days after the injury. Heat relaxes tightened sore muscles and reduces pain. Heat is usually better than cold for chronic pain such as arthritis or for muscle relaxation. Apply heat to the injured area for 20 minutes up to three times a day. Heat lamps, hot water bottles, warm compresses or taking a warm bath or hot shower are common ways to apply heat. A new option for heat therapy is a wearable heat patch, allowing you to apply heat and keep moving.

Why start with the cold compress? Cold reduces inflammation and in the case of muscle soreness, the fever that goes with the inflammation. Cold is also famous for its ability to make muscles shrink. When you have taken the edge off the inflammation, you can apply the heat, which may be more comfortable than the chilling was, which will serve to loosen up the muscle tissue and get you moving normally again.



QUESTIONS

- Which sore muscles can be treated and worked around, and what type of sore muscles require medical attention?
- Can you recognize the differences between muscle strain and muscle sprain?
- How do you decide whether to take a sick day and treat your muscles at home?