

Caring for your Muscle Strain

A muscle strain literally means that the muscle has torn, similar to the way fibers in a piece of cloth would tear. A strained muscle, whether caused by direct blow, overstretching, or repeated straining, works less efficiently. The muscle fibers need time to properly connect once again, otherwise the muscle will remain weak, prone to injury and can ultimately develop tendonitis.

Your strain is probably a mild one if the muscle is swollen, tender and hurts when you stretch or contract it. If, in addition to that, it's hard to move the joints near the muscle you've likely got a moderate strain. A severe strain indicates a completely torn muscle which requires surgical repair.

The good news is that you can treat mild and some moderate strains at home. First apply ice 20 minutes at a time, 5 times per day to reduce swelling and internal bleeding. Wrap the muscle with an Ace bandage and elevate the muscle above the heart. Begin gentle, painless stretches and hold them for 30 seconds. After 36 hours, begin isometric exercises by contracting the muscle for 10 seconds and then relaxing for 5 seconds. You can do up to 3 sets (8-10 repetitions) each day.

After a week of this acute treatment, you're probably ready for a mild weight training program designed to strengthen the fibers in the newly healed muscle. Talk to me and I'd be happy to help you with a rehabilitative program designed specifically for your injury. Remember not to rush the natural healing process. Allow your body the time it needs to properly heal and you'll be rewarded with fewer injuries in the future.

Yours in health,

Dr. Rick

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