

# Sore Muscles? 8 Tips to Ease the Pain

By LISA REED

First things first: What's happening when your muscles feel sore?

The gradually increasing discomfort that occurs between 24 and 48 hours after physical activity is referred to as the "delayed onset muscle soreness" (DOMS). Mild muscle strain creates microscopic tears to the muscle fibers, which in turn causes a bit of pain. The aches and pains should be minor and are simply indications that muscles are adapting to your fitness routine.

Here are eight ways you can reduce muscle soreness.



**1. Move your body:** The last thing you may want to do is move more, but taking a walk and getting up from your office chair will help the sore muscles loosen up and become less stiff all around. Moving also increases blood flow and oxygen to the sore muscles and facilitates the breakdown of lactic acid -- a natural by-product that causes the burning sensation in your muscles when your body is tired.

**2. Warm up:** When working out, always begin with a proper warm-up. Getting your muscles and tendons ready for activity is key to preventing injury.

**3. Stretch:** Stretch each muscle and maintain the stretch for 20 to 30 seconds. Do not bounce your muscles. Rather, hold the position steadily.

**4. Massage and roll:** The most cost-effective way for a massage to assist you in alleviating your pain is to foam roll. A tennis ball and/or lacrosse ball also does the body wonders. The foam roller is a powerful tool that allows you to self-massage and work on the layer of connective tissue around the muscle.

**5. Ice it:** When your muscles are really sore or your legs are overly tired, an ice bath for 10 minutes will do wonders. Add two scoops of Epsom salt to warm water, and then add two bags of ice and cold water. It will definitely be chilly, but, believe me, you'll feel so much better the second you get out.

Cold water breaks the pain by increasing the circulation and is an excellent anti-inflammatory and will greatly speed healing. That's why elite athletes always go into the cold tank after practice -- it assists their muscles in recovering faster.

**6. Flush it:** If you can't quite bear the thought of an intense ice bath, try the popular "flushing" technique. Run hot water over your sore muscles for two minutes and then immediately switch to cold water for 30 seconds. Repeat this five times. The back-and-forth of the hot and cold water opens and closes your blood vessels, which helps to flush the lactic acid from your sore muscles.

**7. Pack in the protein:** One way to help muscles recover faster is to refuel with protein. Muscles are like sponges waiting to refill their energy stores that have been exhausted during workout. Protein has several important functions in the body, but one most important to you as you work out and strength train is to develop muscle sculpture and help muscles recover faster.

Don't reverse all your hard work from your training session by forgetting to eat. But remember: You must eat within 30 minutes of finishing your workout. Even if it's just a glass of low-fat chocolate almond milk or a small meal with complex carbohydrates and protein, such as quinoa salad or a grilled chicken breast, potato and greens.

**8. Drink water:** Without water, your body won't work like it should. Dehydration will cause your body to cramp, adding to the overall soreness, so make sure you are getting plenty of fluids.