Next Step Newsletter

Next Step
Physical Therapy
(516) 681– 8070

June, 2010

Giving you information and answers to any physical therapy, health or fitness related questions

Recovering from muscle strains!

Anyone who has been active in sports or anyone that had to exert themselves more than they are used to has most likely suffered from a muscle strain.

This type of injury is extremely common and generally occur for a few different reasons. Activities that cause you to change directions or stop and start your motion frequently have a high tendency to cause muscular and tendon strains. This is due to the high amounts of forces and energy required to stop your progress in one direction. In order to do that, our muscles have to work eccentrically. When a muscle works eccentrically it's job is to slow or control a certain motion. For instance, when we throw a ball, we accelerate our arm forward to put some speed on the ball. Once we let go, we now have to slow the arm down to a stop. The muscles that slow the arm down are acting eccentrically. This controlled slowing down of a joint that is moving fast causes those muscles to strain, or overstretch, as they try to slow the joint down. This also occurs when we do a squat. When we let our knees bend down to reach towards the floor, gravity wants for us to fall straight down. However, our thigh and buttock muscles act eccentrically to control gravity's force on us so that we (in a controlled fashion) lower ourselves at the desired speed we want.

Muscle strains can be felt immediately, or can take up to 2-3 days to be felt in certain circumstances. The key to recovering from a strain is to really understand what happened to the muscle.

The most common mistake people commit is that they think they need to stretch a strained muscle. Think about it! If a strained muscle is an overstretched muscle, why would you stretch it more??? Stretching can be helpful towards the end of recovery, however, by stretching a strained muscle early on, you risk re-straining, or worsening the original strain.

A combination of ice and reduced activity is a good initial treatment. As the strain heals, heat can then be applied along with a moderate return to activity. Finally, once the strain is no longer painful, gentle stretching can be applied, and is helpful to restore any range of motion deficits as a result of the strain. If you have any questions about how to deal with a strain please don't hesitate to call or email me.

Next Step Physical Therapy would like to thank the following people this month for referring someone to us:

Pavan Kuranganti, Pat Hunt, The Marshall Family, Brett Pastuch, and the Conte Family.

QUESTION of the Month:

L. W. asks… Is alternating between heat and cold good to do when you get an injury??

Great Question! I think the theory of alternating heat and cold treatment, one after the other, makes a lot of sense. The cold stops the blood and fluid from accumulating at the injury site and then the heat then brings in fresh blood to help heal the tissue. Then repeat the cycle again. Unfortunately, all of the research that I have seen (this is popular for sprained ankles) has not demonstrated any beneficial effect of doing this, so it may be a waste of effort.

Updates

Welcome to the Next Step Newsletter!

Win a pair of movie tickets!!

The first 2 people to call us with the answer to this question wins a pair of movie tickets.

When should you stretch a strained muscle????

- If you have a friend or family member that you think could use our help please let us know or have them call us.
- If you would like more information on any of the topics discussed here please give us a call.
- If you have a question that you would like to have answered (maybe in the next newsletter) please don't hesitate to call.
- What topics are you interested in and would like to see in the newsletter? Let us know.

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