

Leg Pain - Muscle Strain

Definition

- Leg muscle pain from exercise or sports (muscle overuse)
- Pain is not caused by an injury
- Also called muscle overuse syndrome

Health Information

Symptoms

- Pain in the leg muscles
- The quads (muscles in front of the thigh) are the most common site.

Pain Scale

- **Mild:** Your child feels pain and tells you about it. But, the pain does not keep your child from any normal activities. School, play and sleep are not changed.
- **Moderate:** The pain keeps your child from doing some normal activities. It may wake them up from sleep.
- **Severe:** The pain is very bad. It keeps your child from doing all normal activities.

Causes

- Constant leg pains are often from hard work or sports.
- Examples of triggers are hiking, running, or jumping too much.
- Muscle pain can also be from a forgotten injury that occurred the day before.

Care Advice

1. **Overview:**
 - Strained muscles from overuse are common after too much exercise or hard sports.
 - Examples are hiking or running.
 - Weekend warriors who are out of shape get the most muscle pains.
 - Here is some care advice that should help.
2. **Pain Medicine:**
 - To help with the pain, give acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) or ibuprofen. Use as needed.
3. **Cold Pack:**
 - For pain or swelling, use a cold pack. You can also use ice wrapped in a wet cloth.
 - Put it on the sore muscles for 20 minutes.
 - Repeat 4 times on the first day, then as needed.
 - Caution: Avoid frostbite.
4. **Heat Pack:**
 - If pain lasts over 2 days, put heat on the sore muscle.
 - Use a heat pack, heating pad or warm wet washcloth.
 - Do this for 10 minutes, then as needed.
 - Caution: Avoid burns.

5. **Activity:**

- Avoid activities that increase the pain.
- Continue gentle stretching exercises.

6. **Prevention of Recurrent Leg Pains:**

- Research has shown that daily stretching exercises can prevent some leg pains.
- Have someone teach you how to stretch the quads, hamstrings, and calf muscles.
- Stretch each muscle in sets of 10. The best time is before and after playing sports.
- Also, be sure your child gets enough calcium in the diet. Daily Vitamin D3 may also help.

7. **What to Expect:**

- A strained muscle hurts for 3 to 7 days. The pain often peaks on day 2.
- After severe overuse, the pain may last a week.

Call Your Doctor If

- Fever, persistent limp, or a swollen joint occurs
- Pain caused by work or sports lasts more than 7 days
- You think your child needs to be seen
- Your child becomes worse

Pediatric Care Advice

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