

AthletiHINTS



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Proper stretching can help reduce muscle strains

Introduction

A muscle strain, often referred to as a “pulled muscle,” is a common, but potentially devastating sports injury. A muscle strain is an injury to muscles or tendons resulting from excessive stretching or tension. (Tendons are bands of fibrous connective tissue attaching muscle to bone.)

Strains are thought to be the result of a quick, sudden stretch to a muscle, or when a muscle generates more force than its fibers can withstand. Either of these can occur during activities that require a sudden change in direction, or quick starts and stops.

The severity of a muscle strain can range from a small separation of muscle fibers causing only mild discomfort, to a complete tear of the muscle, creating severe pain and total loss of muscle function.

Regardless of the severity, the first goal is to decrease inflammation and restore motion. This is accomplished through the use of rest, ice, compression and elevating the injured area. Anti-inflammatory medication is also recommended.

Do not apply heat to the area initially! To be on the safe side, heat should not be used until at least three days after the injury.

Pain-free stretching can begin immediately, but all strengthening exercises and other activities should not be attempted until they can be done without pain. Although muscle strains can be very frustrating, rest is extremely important to avoid further complications and lost time. Anyone suspected of having a severe strain should see a physician for further evaluation.

To help prevent muscle strains it is essential to warm-up and stretch properly before all activities. Stretches should be held for 20 seconds and repeated three times. The stretches should be slow and held in one position without bouncing or jerking. All major muscle groups should be stretched before and after a workout.

To get a list of stretching exercises and instructions, call AthletiCare at 744-PLAY.



A muscle strain results in tearing of separation of fibers.

Strained hamstring muscles