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## Chest pain intercostal muscle strain

Overdid it again, eh? Ease those muscle cramps and other muscular aches and pains by following the home remedies below.Stop. If your muscle cramps up while you're exercising, STOP. Don't try to "run through" a cramp. Doing so increases your chances of seriously injuring the muscle.Give it a stretch and squeeze. When you get a cramp, stretch the cramped muscle with one hand while you gently knead and squeeze the center of the muscle (you'll be able to feel a knot or a hard bulge of muscle) with the fingers of the other hand. Try to feel how it's contracted, and stretch it in the opposite direction. For example, if you have a cramp in your calf muscle, put your foot flat on the ground, then lean forward without allowing your heel to lift off the ground. If you can't stand on your leg, sit on the ground with that leg extended, reach forward and grab the toes or upper portion of the foot, and pull the top of the foot toward the knee.Walk it out. Once an acute cramp passes, don't start exercising heavily right away. Instead, walk for a few minutes to get the blood flowing back into the muscles.Chill out. If you know you've overworked your muscles, immediately take a cold shower or a cold bath to reduce the trauma to them. World-class Australian runner Jack Foster used to hose off his legs with cold water after a hard run. He told skeptics if it was good enough for racehorses, it was good enough for him! Several Olympic runners are known for taking icy plunges after a tough workout, insisting that it prevents muscle soreness and stiffness. If an icy dip seems too much for you, ice packs work well, too. Apply cold packs for 20 to 30 minutes at a time every hour for the first 24 to 72 hours after the activity. Cold helps prevent muscle soreness by constricting the blood vessels, which reduces blood flow and thus inflammation in the area.Avoid heat. Using a heating pad or hot water bottle may feel good, but it's the worst thing for sore muscles because it dilates blood vessels and increases circulation to the area, which in turn leads to more swelling. Heat can actually increase muscle soreness and stiffness, especially if applied during the first 24 hours after the strenuous activity. If you absolutely can't resist using heat on those sore muscles, don't use it for more than 20 minutes every hour. Or, better yet, try contrast therapy -- apply a hot pad for four minutes and an ice pack for one minute. After three or four days, when the swelling and soreness have subsided, you can resume hot baths to help relax the muscles.Take an anti-inflammatory. Taking aspirin, ibuprofen, or naproxen can help reduce muscle inflammation and ease pain. Follow the directions on the label, however, and check with your doctor or pharmacist if you have any questions about whether the medication is safe and appropriate for you. If aspirin upsets your stomach, try the coated variety. Over-the-counter salicylate (the active ingredient in aspirin) creams can also reduce pain and inflammation. They're greaseless, usually won't irritate the skin, and won't cause the stomach problems often associated with taking aspirin by mouth. For a list of precautions to take when using over-the-counter analgesics, click here.Avoid "hot" or "cold" creams. The pharmacy and supermarket shelves are loaded with topical "sports" creams designed to ease sore, stiff muscles. Unfortunately, they don't do much beyond causing a chemical reaction that leaves your skin (but not the underlying muscles) feeling warm or cold. If you do use the topical sports creams, test a small patch of skin first to make sure you're not allergic, and never use these topicals with hot pads, because they can cause serious burns.Do easy stretches. When you're feeling sore and stiff, the last thing you want to do is move, but it's the first thing you should do. Go easy, though, and warm up first with a 20-minute walk.Take a swim. One of the best remedies for sore muscles is swimming. The cold water helps reduce inflammation, and the movement of muscles in water helps stretch them out and ease soreness.Anticipate second-day soreness. You may feel a little stiff or sore a few hours after overexercising, but you'll probably feel even worse two days afterward. Don't panic. It's perfectly normal.Massage it. As long as it's gentle, massage can help ease muscle soreness and stiffness.Wrap up. In cold weather, you can often prevent muscle cramping by keeping the muscles warm with adequate clothing. Layered clothing offers the best insulating value by trapping air between the layers. Some people like the compression and warmth offered by running tights.Warm up your muscles. One way to prevent muscle cramping and injuries is to warm up muscles adequately before exercise. Instead of stretching first, walk a little or bike slowly to "prewarm" the muscles. Then do a series of stretches appropriate for the exercise you're going to be doing. Even if you're only chopping wood or working in the garden, warming up and stretching before the activity will get your muscles ready for work and help prevent muscle cramping and damage.Learn your limits. The key to preventing muscle pain, soreness, and stiffness is to learn your limits. You know you did too much if it makes you feel stiff and sore the next day. Instead of being a weekend warrior, aim to exercise regularly throughout the week. Start at a low intensity and short duration, and gradually, over a period of weeks or months, increase how hard, how long, and how often you exercise.These tips should help you with muscle soreness during the day, but what about those strange, unexplained cramps you sometimes experience when you're fast asleep? In the next section, we'll discuss home remedies for this phenomenon.For more information about remedies for pain, try the following links:This information is solely for informational purposes. IT IS NOT INTENDED TO PROVIDE MEDICAL ADVICE. Neither the Editors of Consumer Guide (R), Publications International, Ltd., the author nor publisher take responsibility for any possible consequences from any treatment, procedure, exercise, dietary modification, action or application of medication which results from reading or following the information contained in this information. 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Evid Based Complement Alternat Med. 20132013:313751. doi: 10.1155/2013/313751. Epub 2013 Nov 25.Bryans R, Decina P, Descarreaux M, et al; Evidence-based guidelines for the chiropractic treatment of adults with neck pain. J Manipulative Physiol Ther. 2014 Jan37(1):42-63. doi: 10.1016/j.jmpt.2013.08.010. Epub 2013 Nov 19.Lawrence DJ, Meeker W, Branson R, et al; Chiropractic management of low back pain and low back-related leg complaints: a literature synthesis. J Manipulative Physiol Ther. 2008 Nov-Dec31(9):659-74. doi: 10.1016/j.jmpt.2008.10.007.Bao Y, Kong X, Yang L, et al; Complementary and alternative medicine for cancer pain: an overview of systematic reviews. Evid Based Complement Alternat Med. 20142014:170396. doi: 10.1155/2014/170396. Epub 2014 Apr 13. Medically reviewed by Drugs.com. Last updated on May 3, 2021. What is a Muscle Strain? A muscle strain is the stretching or tearing of muscle fibers. Most muscle strains happen for one of two reasons: either the muscle has been stretched beyond its limits or it has been forced to contract too strongly. In mild cases, only a few muscle fibers are stretched or torn, and the muscle remains intact and strong. In severe cases, however, the strained muscle may be torn and unable to function properly. To help simplify diagnosis and treatment, doctors often classify muscle strains into three grades, depending on the severity of muscle fiber damage: Grade I strain. In this mild strain, only a few muscle fibers are stretched or torn. Although the injured muscle is tender and painful, it has normal strength. Grade II strain. This is a moderate strain, with a greater number of injured fibers and more severe muscle pain and tenderness. There is also mild swelling, noticeable loss of strength and sometimes a bruise. Grade III strain. This strain tears the muscle all the way through, sometimes causing a "pop" sensation as the muscle rips into two separate pieces or shears away from its tendon. Grade III strains are serious injuries that cause complete loss of muscle function, as well as considerable pain, swelling, tenderness and discoloration. Because Grade III strains usually cause a sharp break in the normal outline of the muscle, there may be an obvious "dent" or "gap" under the skin where the ripped pieces of muscle have come apart. Although the risk of muscle strain is especially high during sports activities, you also can strain a muscle by lifting a heavy carton or by simply stepping off a curb. Almost all types of athletic activity carry some risk of muscle strains, but these injuries tend to happen most often in contact sports, such as football, and in sports that require quick starts, such as basketball and tennis. Symptoms Symptoms of muscle strain include: Muscle pain and tenderness, especially after an activity that stretches or violently contracts the muscle -- Pain usually increases when you move the muscle but is relieved by rest. Muscle swelling, discoloration or both. Muscle cramp or spasm. Either a decrease in muscle strength or (in Grade III strains) a complete loss of muscle function. A pop in the muscle at the time of injury. A gap, dent or other defect in the normal outline of the muscle (in Grade III strain) Diagnosis Your doctor will want to know what type of activity triggered your muscle pain and whether there was a pop in the muscle at the time of injury. The doctor will ask about your symptoms, especially any decrease in muscle strength or any difficulty moving. Your doctor will want to know whether you've had recent fever, weight loss, leg numbness, urinary or bladder problems, or other symptoms that may point to a more severe medical problem. After noting your symptoms and past medical history, your doctor will examine you, checking for muscle tenderness, spasm, weakness and decreased muscle movement. If this exam points to a mild or moderate muscle strain, you may not need any additional testing. However, if the diagnosis is in doubt, X-rays or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan may be helpful. If you have back pain, your doctor may order additional tests to check for a urinary tract infection or a problem involving the vertebrae (backbones), vertebral disks, spinal canal or spinal cord. Expected Duration How long a sprain lasts depends on the location and severity of the injury. Symptoms of a mild back strain usually improve within one to two weeks and are gone within four to six weeks. In the legs, mild or moderate strains may take up to 8 to 10 weeks or more to heal. Symptoms of a severe (Grade III) strain may persist until the torn muscle is repaired surgically. Prevention To help prevent muscle strains: Warm up before participating in sports and activities. Follow an exercise program aimed at stretching and strengthening your muscles. Increase the intensity of your training program gradually. Never push yourself too hard, too soon. Maintain a healthy body weight. Obesity can stress muscles, especially in your legs and back. Practice good posture when you sit and stand. Use the correct technique when you lift heavy loads. Treatment If you have a Grade I or Grade II strain, your doctor will ask you to follow the RICE rule: Rest the injured muscle (and take a temporary break from sports activities). Ice the injured area to reduce swelling. Compress the muscle with an elastic bandage. Elevate the injured area. To help relieve muscle pain and swelling, your doctor may suggest that you take acetaminophen (Tylenol and others) or a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID), such as ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin and others). For someone with a painful back strain that does not improve with NSAIDs or acetaminophen (Tylenol), prescription pain medications or muscle relaxants may be appropriate. If you have a severe Grade II or Grade III strain, your doctor may refer you to an orthopedic specialist. Depending on the severity and location of your muscle strain, the orthopedist may immobilize the injured muscle in a cast for several weeks or repair it surgically. Mild strains may heal quickly on their own, but more severe strains may require a rehabilitation program. When To Call a Professional Call your doctor promptly if: You hear or feel a pop in your muscle at the time of injury. You have severe pain, swelling or discoloration in the injured muscle. Your injured muscle is obviously weak or has difficulty moving compared to the same muscle on the opposite side of your body. You have mild muscle symptoms that do not improve after 48 hours. You have severe back pain that makes it impossible for you to do normal daily activities, or you have mild back pain that worsens after a few days. You are being treated for a strained back and your symptoms do not improve within two weeks. You have back pain together with any of the following symptoms, which can signal a medical problem that is more serious than a mild back strain: Fever or chills Pain or a burning feeling when you urinate Sudden weakness, numbness or tingling in a leg Numbness in your groin or rectum Difficulty controlling your bladder or bowel function Prognosis Recovery depends on the location and severity of your muscle strain. In general, almost all Grade I strains heal within a few weeks, whereas Grade II strains may take two to three months or longer. After surgery to repair a Grade III strain, most people regain normal muscle function after several months of rehabilitation. 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