

CALF STRAIN

A calf strain is a common injury and is often caused by overstretching or putting excess force through the calf muscles at the back of the lower leg. In this injury, the muscle fibers are stretched and weakened, resulting in bleeding into the muscles.



Symptoms:

- Mild ache when resting to moderate pain when using the affected muscle
- Swelling
- A change in the colour of your skin over your calf area, redness or bruising
- Difficulty in rising up on your toes or pushing off from your foot

Treatment:

- **Rest:** Rest will help prevent further injury and allows the healing process to begin. For the first few days, reduce the amount of walking you do. Gently move your ankle regularly to avoid stiffness. Avoid forceful and strenuous activity like running and jumping until you can walk without any pain. Always try to walk normally i.e. your heel strikes the floor first, rock forward on your foot and then push off with your toes.

- **Ice:** Apply cold packs wrapped in a towel for up to 15-20 minutes 2-3 times a day.
- **Compression:** The painful area can be compressed with a bandage to reduce swelling and limit movement which can cause further damage.
- **Elevation:** keep your leg raised and supported on a pillow as much as possible to help reduce any swelling.

Recovery:

Healing of muscles can normally take about six weeks, though everyone recovers from injuries at different rates. Healing of calf muscles depends on the severity of the injury.

As healing gets underway, it is important to begin a series of exercises to gently stretch the calf muscles. This prevents the knee and ankle joint from getting stiff and also helps to reduce the risk of further injury.

Exercise considerations:

- Do all the exercises within pain free limits, stretch pain is common with exercises and that should ease off within 30 minutes-1 hour after having done the exercises
- Post exercise soreness is quite common and could be felt up to 48 hours after having done the exercise regime. This should get better as you continue with the regime over time
- If any exercise worsens your symptoms, stop that exercise and seek advice from your physiotherapist.