

Muscle Pain

Oral analgesics

Your pharmacist can offer a wide variety of over-the-counter oral analgesics. Muscle relaxants can induce sleep and cause dry mouth. To choose the treatment that is best for you, speak to your pharmacist.

Warning Signs

If you develop unexplained muscle pain that is persistent or severe, or widespread pain accompanied by fever, chills or fatigue, it is advised that you see a medical professional.

Use this information wisely and always exercise caution.

For more information or support:
Canadian Physiotherapy Association
www.physiotherapy.ca

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Muscle pain can affect any of the muscles in the body. While there is a wide range of causes, some of the most common ones include:

- A sudden or awkward movement
- Taking a hit (trauma)
- Strenuous or different exercise
- Side effects from medications
- Repetitive movements
- Conditions such as fibromyalgia or a viral infection

Treatment

There are several treatment options available to relieve this type of pain:

- Rest
- Massage
- Use of analgesics such as acetaminophen and ibuprofen
- Use of muscle relaxants
- Use of topical analgesics
- Use of heat or cold therapy

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Cold Therapy

When an injury occurs, swelling develops almost immediately and persists for about 48 hours. Use ice as soon as possible to stop the swelling and to minimize the pain. Apply ice for 10 to 20 minutes every 2 to 3 hours while awake. To prevent frostbite, do not apply ice directly on the skin and do not exceed the recommended application time. Do not apply heat at this stage. Because of its cooling effect, ice reduces blood flow to the injured area, reduces swelling and numbs pain, thereby limiting tissue damage and bleeding risk. Regular ice works very well and there are synthetic substances available as well. Simply place a few whole or crushed ice cubes in a plastic bag and wrap in a wet towel. Apply the ice to the injured area. If there is a significant amount of swelling, it may help to apply a pressure bandage and elevate the affected limb above the heart.

Caution: **Ice is not recommended** if you have circulation problems, anemia, Raynaud's disease or syndrome (abnormal closure of the blood vessels in response to cold), an open or infected sore, or cold urticaria.

Heat Therapy

Swelling usually stabilizes after about two days. The body then works to repair the damaged tissue and swelling is reduced. If inflammation persists, apply heat to the injured area. The heat will activate

See a doctor or physiotherapist if:

- The measures in this pamphlet do not provide relief
- Pain increases
- Loss of mobility in the affected area
- Pain is disrupting sleep
- Rest has not helped to improve the symptoms

blood flow and facilitate the healing process to relieve pain. Apply heat for 15 to 30 minutes, 4 times a day. Moist heat is preferable (e.g. hot water bottle). Protect the skin from burns by wrapping the hot water bottle in a towel.

Caution: **Heat is not recommended** if you have circulation problems, bleeding, an open or infected sore or a cancerous tumour in the area where the heat is to be applied.

Topical Analgesics

A topical analgesic can be applied by massaging the area in question more or less frequently, depending on the product used. Because they do not all contain the same ingredients, the effectiveness and effect of these products can vary. They can produce a heating or cooling sensation or no sensation at all. Even though they are applied on the skin, topical analgesics can interact with medications that are taken orally.