Strains

Definition
A strain is when a muscle becomes overstretched and tears. This painful injury, also called a pulled muscle, can be caused by an accident, improper use of a muscle or overuse of a muscle. Strains can happen suddenly or develop over time. Back and hamstring muscle strains are common.

Causes
- Excessive physical activity
- Improper warming up before a physical activity
- Poor flexibility

Symptoms
- Pain and difficulty moving the injured muscle
- Discolored and bruised skin
- Swelling

First Aid
1. Apply ice immediately to reduce swelling. Wrap ice in a cloth; avoid using directly on the skin. Apply for 10-15 minutes hourly the first day and then every 3-4 hours.
2. Use ice for the first 3 days or until swelling is gone. After that, either ice or heat may be helpful.
3. Rest the pulled muscle for at least a day. Keep the area elevated above the heart if possible.
4. Avoid using a strained muscle while it is still painful. When the pain subsides, start activity slowly and in moderation.

When to Contact a Medical Professional
- You are unable to move the muscle
- The injury is bleeding
- The pain does not go away for several weeks after rest

Prevention
- Warm-up properly before exercise, sports and strenuous activity. Proper warm-up includes a gradual build-up of activity until perspiration begins. Stretch only after warming up. A cold muscle is more likely to tear during stretching
- Keep your muscles strong and flexible through regular strength, conditioning and flexibility activities.
- Wear proper shoes and make sure to use all protective equipment.

For more information, or to contact one of our Sports Medicine Outreach Liaisons, email us at SportsMedicine@amitahealth.org or call us at 224.273.2416

AMITAhealth.org/SportsMedicine
The AMITA Health Orthopedics Institute is a national leader in musculoskeletal care, offering comprehensive and advanced care for a wide range of conditions. We are proactive about keeping you active. That is why our multi-disciplinary orthopedic teams enlist a comprehensive leading edge approach to the prevention, assessment, treatment and rehabilitation of musculoskeletal injuries.

Our team of highly-experienced board-certified physicians, surgeons, therapists and nurses are dedicated to providing patients of all ages with a personalized treatment program that is customized for your condition, lifestyle and personal preferences.

We work hard to prevent sports-related injuries, which have become increasingly more common among athletes, especially children. AMITA Health Sports Medicine Outreach Liaisons keep kids active and participating in the extracurricular activities they enjoy by delivering educational programs and support for parents, coaches and athletes that focus on injury prevention, proper technique and overall athletic care.

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