



While you will probably feel slower or stiffer, exercising with sore muscles will not hurt you and is unlikely to hinder your training progress.

Should I exercise if I am still sore from last time?

Feeling sore after a workout is normal, but should you push through the pain or give your body a break? Here is what science says about exercising with sore muscles and how to recover safely.

BY HUNTER BENNETT

If you are feeling sore from a run or gym session, you might wonder whether it is better to push through or give your body a rest.

This achy or stiff feeling in your muscles after exercise is known as "delayed onset muscle soreness" (DOMS). Soreness usually sets in within the first 12 to 24 hours after your exercise session, and often peaks 24 to 72 hours after.

In most instances, DOMS will disappear completely in three to five days. But what should you do in the meantime? Is it okay to exercise if you are still sore? Here is what the evidence says.

Why do muscles get sore after a workout?

When you exercise, tiny tears (also called "microtears") occur in your muscles. Then, as your body floods the area with fluids and nutrients to repair them, it causes inflammation. This is part of the

normal recovery process, and helps stimulate increases in muscle strength and size.

But inflammation also stimulates pain receptors, which makes you feel sore in the days after your workout.

How sore you feel will depend on the exercise you do. DOMS is more likely when you have not exercised for a while, you do a new type of exercise, or it puts a large load on your muscles (for example, weight training or running).

Basically, it is your muscles' response to doing something more demanding or challenging than usual.

The more often you do the same type of exercise, the less likely you are to feel sore.

Should you be sore after every workout?

Muscle soreness is completely normal, especially if you are new to exercise. But it is not necessarily a good indicator of progress. All it really tells us is that our body is adapting to a new form of exercise or a sudden increase in load.

It does not tell us whether or not that exercise was effective at building muscle and improving fitness, especially if you have been exercising consistently and gradually increasing your load or frequency.

For example, someone who runs regularly is unlikely to feel sore after a single running session, but it will still improve their fitness.

Similarly, if you lift weights regularly, us-

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Resilience. Soreness is not a setback, it is a signal that your body is adapting to something new. The key is balance: move gently, recover wisely, and know the difference between discomfort and injury. Progress does not come from punishment, but from consistency, patience, and listening carefully to what your body is telling you.”

ing heavier weights than usual will at most give you only mild DOMS. Yet each training session will still be helping you improve strength and build muscle.

So, should I exercise if I am still sore?

It depends if you are concerned about injury or performance.

Exercising while recovering from DOMS will not hurt you. But some evidence suggests your strength and performance may decline when you are sore. This means you probably will not be able to lift as much or run as fast while you have DOMS.

Some research has also shown that muscle damage can negatively affect balance. This might increase your risk of falling or even getting an injury such as a sprained ankle.

Another study found that soreness can also reduce your skill performance (in this case, basketball shooting accuracy). So, you might notice an impact if you are exercising with certain performance goals in mind.

What about rest days?

Taking days off for recovery in between exercise sessions does not seem to make much difference for long-term progress in building strength or fitness.

Research has compared training on consecutive days, for example, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, with non-consecutive days, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

And it does not seem to make a dif-