

# “Sore Muscles”

explained by:

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## SORE MUSCLES

Sore muscles are a common complaint no matter your age. If you are young, and just started **exercising** like lifting weights or running, then the following day you can expect some muscle pain. **That is normal.** Even if you do something you are not used to, like walking down twenty flights of stairs when you usually take the elevator, your legs could be sore the following day or two. Again, this is normal. How do you make it better fast? You can't expect take an over-the-counter pain medication like Tylenol or Advil, or anything with Ibuprofen in it. Regular aspirin could help, too. Just make sure you are not allergic to these medications. Does hot or cold make it better? It depends on how long it's been and is patient specific. Usually, ice right after, and heat a day or two later.

What if you are young and your muscles are sore for no apparent reason? That is not very common, but it can occur, so let's look at some causes.

We don't believe there is a common cause of this, but one cause could be **Dermatomyositis**. This is an **autoimmune disease** that is poorly understood, but in short, this a disease in which your body makes **antibodies** to some of your skeletal muscles. As "dermo" means skin, and as "myo" means muscle, and "itis" means inflammation, it is a disease that affects muscles and skin. This results in any or all muscles hurting for no apparent reason. It is associated in some patients with **Gottron's Papules** on the knuckle joints of the fingers. Some patients have a purplish pattern on their skin called **Livedo Reticularis**. It looks somewhat like your skin does when you are cold. Symptoms are worse upon awakening, and often the muscles get somewhat weak. It can resolve on its own, but in certain patients, it can get worse. If you think you have this and have a scaly rash on your knuckles, see your doctor. The author of this talk thought he had it as a youngster.

Some people can have this same disease affect the heart as well and weaken it, but we believe this is fairly rare.

Other autoimmune diseases like **Rheumatoid Arthritis, Lupus, Ankylosing Spondylitis** and some forms of **Psoriatic Arthritis** can cause similar symptoms, however, most of these diseases affect the joints with accompanying joint swelling and soreness.

There is another more esoteric disease called **Polymyalgia Rheumatica** that can cause most of your muscles to get weak and be sore. This usually occurs in older people and really affects the thigh muscles, making them smaller and causing you to have difficulty getting out of the chair. If you have this, you will need to see a Rheumatologist quickly.

**Polymyositis** is another poorly understood autoimmune disease that can cause muscle pain.

There are **infectious agents** in under-cooked pork that can cause muscle pain. Don't eat raw ham! This disease is called **Trichinosis**. Other muscle viral disorders like the flu virus and others can cause muscle aches and pains.

For older patients, especially those on **high cholesterol** and **high blood pressure** medications, can have side effects that cause muscles to hurt. The most common being cholesterol medications that come under the heading of "**statins**". These are powerful cholesterol lowering drugs and are commonly used. If you are taking a statin, and your muscles ache, see your doctor and ask if you can try without it for a while and see if it gets better. If it does, and you restart the same medicine and it comes back, it is likely the statin drug. Those with high blood pressure taking water pills can get muscle cramps from **low potassium or magnesium**. If you have these discomforts and take a diuretic (which is a water pill), have your doctor check your potassium and magnesium levels. If they are low, take supplemental electrolytes as your doctor prescribes them.

Muscle pain can be a side effect of many medications, so if you have these symptoms and take several medications, look them up online.

A severe "**crush**" **trauma** to a large muscle can cause release of chemicals that can damage your kidneys. This is called **Rhabdomyolysis** and can be dangerous. If a car fell on you and you had a big muscle crushed and your urine looks the same color as Coke, see your doctor quickly.

In **South America**, and perhaps elsewhere, **Chagas's Disease** can cause muscle pain. Even **Syphilis** if left untreated can lodge **spirochetes** in the muscles and cause pain.

Lastly, there are many diseases that affect not only muscles, but also other organs that can cause muscle pain. These will have to be diagnosed by your doctor.

