

Calf Strain Advice

What is Calf Strain?

Calf strain involves one or both of the muscles of your calf. The Gastrocnemius and the Soleus muscle are the major muscles that make up your calf. Normally it is the gastrocnemius muscle that is injured. The strain usually occurs in sports often in actions where there are sudden halts or quick movements (tennis, badminton or squash). This sudden stretch can cause a tear and damage to the muscle.



What are the Symptoms?

- Pain in the back of the calf.
- Pain on walking or standing on tip toe.
- Swelling or bruising in the calf muscle.

The following advice should help you to recover:

Things you should do	Things you should not do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rest for the first 24 - 48 hours after your injury avoid long spells of not moving at all. • When sitting down keep your leg raised (elevated) with your foot higher than your bottom to help prevent/reduce the swelling. • Use ice packs (frozen peas wrapped in a towel will do), for 10-15 minutes every 2 hours if you can. • Take the recommended medication to relieve the pain – this can be bought over the counter from a pharmacy or local shops. Follow the instructions on the packet/bottle. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use ice packs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ over areas of skin that are in poor condition. ○ If you have poor sensation to cold. ○ If you know you have poor circulation. • Place ice packs directly onto your skin as they can burn. • Do not leave ice on while asleep. • Wear any support bandage in bed. • Stand still for long periods.

For the first 72 hours after a sprain or strain, you should avoid HARMED:

- H**eat (such as hot baths, saunas, or heat packs),
- A**lcohol,
- R**unning (or any other exercise that could cause more damage).
- M**assage,
- D**riving.

We advise you to try and put weight on the leg and walk as pain allows. If you have been given crutches, use them to help you get around. Do whatever you normally would and stay at, or return to work - this is important and is the best way to get better. Short walks are good for the healing muscle - but avoid long distances and prolonged periods of standing.

When going upstairs, lead with your good leg and when going downstairs, lead with your injured leg – this will help to reduce the strain on your calf - if there's a handrail, use it.

Using an insole under your heel in your shoe will avoid stretching your calf muscles and will provide comfort while walking. You can get these from a pharmacy.

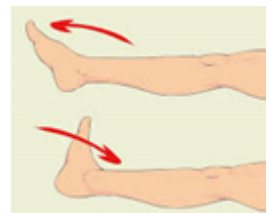
Avoid sports or heavy lifting until you have less discomfort and good movement.

It may take 6-8 weeks for your calf to return to normal. Remember it is important to warm up properly before you exercise

What exercises can I do?

Move your knee and ankle gently as pain allows, but do not over stretch your calf muscle. You can do these simple exercises

Exercise 1 Sit on the floor or a chair with your leg straight out in front of you. Pull your toes and foot back towards you, hold for 5 seconds and relax. Repeat this 10-20 times 4 times a day.



Exercise 2



Sit with your knees bent and feet on the floor. Raise the toes and foot up towards you, keeping the heel on the floor. Hold for 5 seconds and relax. Repeat 10-20 times 4 times a day

Exercise 3 Sit on a chair and straighten and bend your knee Repeat 10 times and 4 times a day

Exercise 4

Stand facing a wall and step backwards with your injured leg.

Keep this leg straight with your toes pointing forward and the heel on the floor.

Now bend your other knee until you feel a stretch in the calf of your injured leg. Hold this for 30 seconds and repeat 4 times per day.



Exercise 5



Once you are able to stand on your toes without pain you can start to strengthen the muscle.

Stand holding on to a chair, spread your weight equally over both feet and push up onto your toes as high as possible.

Hold for 5 seconds and slowly lower.

Repeat 10 times, and 4 times per day.

Gradually increase the time you hold for and the number of repetitions.

Pain Relief:

Painkillers, such as **Paracetamol**, are useful to ease pain, but it is best to take them regularly for a few days or so rather than every now and then. They can be bought over the counter from a pharmacy or local shops. Make sure you do not take any other product containing Paracetamol. If Paracetamol does not help at all despite taking the recommended dose then try changing to Ibuprofen 400 mg three times a day. You can also take both drugs – speak to a pharmacist about the best way to do this. If you have been advised not to take Ibuprofen in the past or are on any blood thinning tablets then avoid Ibuprofen.

With all medication it is essential that you follow the instructions on the packet or bottle carefully

Anti-inflammatory painkillers can also be used. These relieve pain and may also limit inflammation and swelling, however if you are pregnant or trying to get pregnant you should not use them. Side effects sometimes occur with anti-inflammatory painkillers - stomach pain and bleeding from the stomach, are the most serious. Some people with asthma, high blood pressure, kidney failure or heart failure may not be able to take them either. You can buy Ibuprofen at pharmacies both in tablet and gel form. There is less risk of side-effects with the gel, however, the amount of the drug that gets into the bloodstream is much less than with tablets and it is important that you use enough gel.

This leaflet only gives general advice and you may have been referred to the Physiotherapy department for treatment to help with your mobility. Please keep the appointment. Avoid active sports until you are seen in the Physiotherapy department.

If you have worsening symptoms, or if you have not improved within 10 days, we advise you to contact your GP or return to the Emergency Department/MIU department where you were seen.

If you are at all concerned about your injury please contact the relevant Emergency Department/Minor Injury Unit (MIU):

Royal Gwent Hospital: 01633 234056

Nevill Hall Hospital: 01873 732073

Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr (YYF) MIU 01443 802353 or 802349

Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan (YAB) MIU: 01495 363318

**“This document is available in Welsh /
Mae’r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg”.**