

# Muscle strain

Also called: pulled muscle

A stretching or tearing of a muscle or a tissue connecting muscle to bone (tendon).

## Very common

More than 3 million US cases per year



Usually self-treatable



Usually self-diagnosable



Lab tests or imaging rarely required



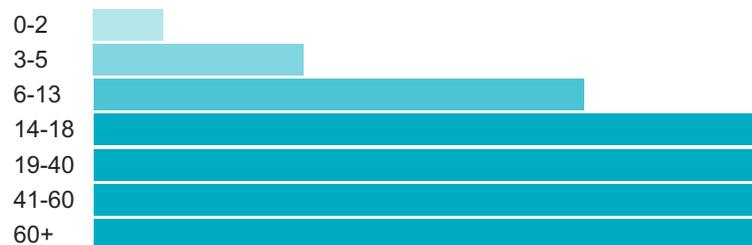
Short-term: resolves within days to weeks

Strains often occur in the lower back and in the muscle in the back of the thigh.

Symptoms include pain, swelling, muscle spasms, and limited ability to move the muscle.

Treatment may include pain relievers, ice, or splinting.

## Ages affected



## Symptoms

### Usually self-diagnosable

Symptoms include pain, swelling, muscle spasms, and limited ability to move the muscle.

### People may experience:

**Pain areas:** in the joints or muscles

**Muscular:** cramping, limited range of motion, or muscle spasms

**Also common:** swelling or tenderness

## Treatments

### Treatment consists of self care and anti-inflammatories

Treatment may include pain relievers, ice, or splinting.

## Self-care

**RICE (Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation):** Rest, ice, compression, and elevation. A first-aid treatment for sprains and strains.

**Heating pad:** Soothes painful muscles or joints and can help drain skin infections.

**Cold compress:** Reduces inflammation and dulls sensation of pain.

**Physical exercise:** Aerobic activity for 20-30 minutes 5 days a week improves cardiovascular health. If injured, pursuing an activity that avoids the injured muscle group or joint can help maintain physical function while recovering.

## Therapies

**Chiropractic treatment techniques:** Adjusting the spine and massaging the back muscles to relieve pain.

**Massage:** Relaxes tense muscles.

**Acupuncture:** Insertion of needles into specific points on the body to relieve pain and treat other conditions. A form of traditional Chinese medicine.

## Medications

**Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug:** Relieves pain, decreases inflammation, and reduces fever.

- Ibuprofen (Advil, Children's Profen IB, Children's Ibu-Drops, I-Prin, and Motrin IB)

**Analgesic:** Relieves pain.

- Acetaminophen (Tylenol, Mapap, Feverall, Acephen, and Nortemp)

## Devices

**Elastic bandage:** Stretchy bandages used to wrap sprains and strains. Provides support and compression during recovery.

**Splint:** A rigid accessory used to stabilize and protect an injured joint.

## Specialists

**Primary care provider (PCP):** Prevents, diagnoses, and treats diseases.

**Sports medicine:** Treats and prevents sports and exercise injuries.

**Physical therapist:** Restores muscle strength and function through exercise.

**Emergency medicine doctor:** Treats patients in the emergency department.

Consult a doctor for medical advice

Note: The information you see describes what usually happens with a medical condition, but doesn't apply to everyone. This information isn't medical advice, so make sure to contact a healthcare provider if you have a medical problem. If you think you may have a medical emergency, call your doctor or a emergency number immediately.

**Sources:** Mayo Clinic and others. [Learn more](#)