

Soreness, Strain or Warning Sign?™

Use the timing, sensation and effect on movement to decide what kind of next step may be appropriate.



This guide cannot diagnose an injury. When you are unsure, pause the activity and seek guidance.



What Does It Feel Like?



Likely Exercise Soreness

Monitor & Recover



- Usually begins later, often 12 to 24 hours after unfamiliar or harder exercise
- Feels dull, achy, tender or stiff
- Often affects the muscles you trained on both sides
- May ease as you warm up gently
- Gradually improves over a few days

Possible Strain or Injury

Stop & Reassess



- May begin during a movement or soon afterward
- Feels sharp, pulling, burning or very localized
- May include swelling, bruising or reduced strength
- Changes how you walk, lift or move
- Returns or worsens when you repeat the activity

Warning Sign

Seek Prompt Guidance



- Sudden severe pain or a pop with loss of function
- Cannot bear weight or use the area normally
- A joint looks deformed, gives way or rapidly swells
- New numbness, tingling or weakness
- Pain is worsening instead of settling

Symptoms do not always fit neatly into one column. If the pattern is unclear, choose the more cautious next step.



What Should I Do Next?



For Mild Muscle Soreness



- Try gentle movement
- Use a lighter workout or rest the area
- Return gradually as soreness settles
- Notice whether normal movement is improving



You do not need to push through soreness to make progress.



For a Possible Strain

- Stop the movement that triggered it
- Protect the area from painful loading
- Choose comfortable daily movement only
- Seek guidance if pain affects function, persists or worsens



Do not repeatedly test a painful movement.



For a Warning Sign

- Stop the activity
- Do not force the area or continue exercising
- Arrange prompt medical assessment
- Use urgent care or emergency services when symptoms are severe or sudden



Do not drive yourself if you feel faint or seriously unwell.



Before You Return



Everyday movement is comfortable



Swelling is settling



Range of motion is improving



You can begin with less load, range or speed

If pain returns, stop and step back.

Movement or activity: _____

When symptoms began: During / Soon after / Later

Today it feels: Better / Same / Worse



Stop Exercise & Seek Urgent Medical Care

- Chest pain or pressure
- Fainting or severe dizziness
- Unusual shortness of breath
- Sudden one-sided weakness, facial droop or trouble speaking

- New loss of bladder or bowel control with saddle-area numbness or leg weakness
- Severe pain after a fall, especially with possible head, spine or hip injury



Gentle Reminder

Pain is information. Changing or stopping an exercise is a sensible response, not a failure.



Martine's Midlife Wellness Tip

Write down what you were doing, when the symptom began and what makes it better or worse. Those details can help a clinician.



When to Ask for Guidance

Seek help sooner if you have osteoporosis, take blood thinners, recently had surgery or have a condition that affects sensation or balance.

