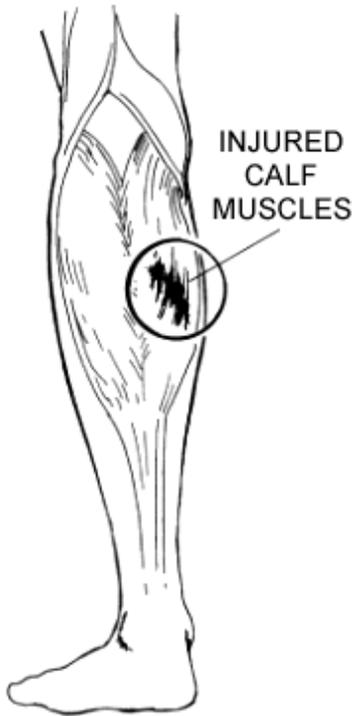


Calf Strain



What is it? - An excessive stretch or tearing of muscle and related tissues within one of two “calf” muscles ‘Gastrocnemius and Soleus’. The “Medial Head of Gastrocnemius” is by far the most commonly injured.

What Causes this? - Calf strains are often acute in nature and caused by sudden actions such as accelerating from a stationary position, lunging forward when playing tennis or sudden overstretching such as missing your step on a kerb. Calf tightness, muscle imbalances and poor foot posture may predispose an individual to calf strains.

What are the symptoms? - You may feel as though you have been hit in the calf, with acute pain felt anywhere along the length of the calf muscle. There will be pain when standing on your tip-toes and when your foot is pulled upward. In severe strains the limb may become swollen and bruising may develop within 24-48 hours.

What will physiotherapy consist of?

Massage - encompassing a variety of techniques with sufficient pressure through the superficial tissue to reach the deep lying structures. It is used to increase blood flow, decrease swelling, reduce muscle spasm and promote normal tissue repair.

Deep friction - an aggressive massage technique applied across the tissue as deeply as possible to break down scar tissue, restore normal movement and prepare the structure for mobilisation

or manipulation. This technique is initially painful but then causes a numbing effect.

Mobilisation - a manual technique where the joint and soft tissues are gently moved by the therapist to restore normal range, lubricate tissues and relieve pain.

Ultrasonic Therapy - transmits sound waves through the tissues stimulating the body’s chemical reactions and therefore healing process, just as shaking a test tube in the laboratory speeds up a chemical reaction. It reduces tissue spasm, accelerates healing and results in pain relief.

Interferential Therapy - introduces a small electrical current into the tissues and can be used at varying frequencies for differing treatment effects. E.g. pain relief, muscle or nerve stimulation, promoting blood flow and reducing inflammation.

Other treatments that could be used

Acupuncture - an oriental technique of introducing needles into the skin to increase or decrease energy flow to promote pain relief and healing.

Taping/Strapping - may be used if thought necessary to restrict abnormal movement and prevent further damage.

What can you do to help your condition?

Active Rest – keep active but avoid aggravate activities particularly weight bearing activities such as running.

Apply an ice pack - for a maximum of 20 minutes. A bag of frozen peas wrapped in a damp cloth works well because it moulds to the shape of the tissues. Ensure that you do not apply ice directly to the skin as this can cause an ice burn.

Exercise programme – This is the most important part of the rehabilitation, your therapist will instruct you as to which exercises to begin with, when to add the others, as well as how to progress the exercises.

Medication - Ask your GP or Pharmacist for advice on the best medication for your condition.

Podiatry - an analysis of the foot mechanics and structure during walking or running and correction as appropriate.

What if physiotherapy does not help or resolve my condition? - It is very rare that physiotherapy does not resolve this condition, in these cases we will refer you on for further investigation.