

## Stretching each day keeps the doctor away.

Muscle soreness following strenuous exercising is a common complaint among people who have begun a new or more vigorous program.

Everybody has probably experience this to some degree. You have begun a new exercise or started up after a vacation and you wake up the following morning and you can hardly get out of bed. What you are experiencing is known as delayed onset muscle soreness. This is muscle soreness felt twenty four to thirty six hours after an exercise session. This soreness is caused by several things that occur in your exercising muscles every time you workout.

When you exercise muscles beyond what they are used to, you can actually produce small microtears in the muscle tissue. This is more likely in very strenuous activity such as long distance running and heavy or prolonged weight lifting. These microtears will naturally heal in a few days or so if the athlete rests from painful activity.

Soreness can also be caused by a build-up of waste products from the working muscles. Lactic acid is a normal by product of muscle activity and can be caustic to surrounding the tissue. If this fluid remains in the muscles following the exercise, post exercise soreness can result. The fluid puts pressure on the nerve endings in the muscle and surrounding tissue and causes pain.

New or more vigorous exercises can also cause local muscle spasms which can cause delayed muscle soreness. These spasms can put pressure on surrounding structures, cut off blood supply to the muscle or cause more fluid retention.

Another way that exercising can cause this soreness is with actual damage or tearing of the connective tissue that surrounds all muscles and their tendons. This tissue encircles each muscle like an envelope and can be torn or stretched during heavy activity.

Whatever the cause of delayed onset muscle soreness, it is not very comfortable and may discourage many people from starting or continuing a new exercise program. A few helpful hints can keep this soreness from occurring or lessening its effects if it does.

Always begin a new athletic endeavor slowly and gradually. Jumping into any exercise program too fast will lend itself to muscular soreness. Stretching or proper warm-up prior to and after exercising is the best way to reduce or eliminate delayed soreness. By doing some stretches or light exercising prior to vigorous exercise, you will warm up the muscles, better preparing them for what is to come. If you do notice some soreness a day or two after exercising, you can lessen discomfort by performing light stretching exercise and light physical activity.