Core Therapy

Providing a Holistic and Professional approach to Sports Massage Therapy.

August 2015 Newsletter

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STRETCH OF THE MONTH

THE BANANA STRETCH

Overdeveloped and tight hip flexors can contribute to lower back pain by causing the pelvis to tilt forward. To counteract this, you must stretch the hip flexors and strengthen the abdominal muscles.

Due to the position and function of the iliopsoas muscle most of the work we do involves concentric (shortening contractions). There are limited exercises that fully stretch out the iliopsoas muscle but the Banana Stretch is one of them.

- Lay flat on the exercise mat.
- Slowly, take little steps and shuffle your feet as far to your right as you can. Make sure you keep the backs of your hips on the floor.
- Take your Left arm above your head and towards the floor (do not worry if your arm doesn't reach the floor)
- Try to shuffle your shoulders towards your right as far as you can comfortably.
- In this position, although difficult at first, allow all of your muscles to relax. This will make the stretch more effective.
- As you relax, focus your mind on your breathing, allowing your abdomen to expand. Imagine breathing into your tummy to stretch out this deep muscle.

Try to hold the stretch for 2-3 minutes and then repeat on the other side.

Prepare, Prevent, Perform

EXERCISE OF THE MONTH

PLANK VARIATIONS FOR A STRONGER CORE

Your core muscles, which include your abs, glutes, hips and lower back, work together to hold your torso solid when you run. This keeps energy from being wasted, prevents a litany of injuries and powers your stride. One of the best ways to strengthen your core is by performing plank exercises.

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The Form

Having good technique is vital if you want the full benefits of your effort and to **avoid injury**. Use these best practices below to work through the plank variations:

- Squeeze your glutes to stabilise the bottom half of your body.
- Avoid locking your knees or collapsing your lower back.
- Actively contract your shoulder blades to push the shoulders down in relation to your torso.
- Tighten your abdominals by drawing your belly button toward your spine.
- Lengthen your spine by lifting your head away from your shoulders.
- Position your feet at least hip-width apart, unless otherwise stated.

Planks can be performed before, during and after your run or even in the middle (use your judgment!). They are quick, effective and will help you become the best athlete you can be.

Perform planks with your knees on the floor for easier variations.

Basic Plank

Lie down facing the floor. Place your palms directly under your shoulders with your forearms on the ground. Push up onto your forearms, while lifting your hips. Keep your head, back and feet in a straight line. Keep your neck neutral by looking at the floor about one foot in front of your hands.

...Not at the camera!!

Basic Plank with a Leg Raise

Start in basic plank position. Slowly raise one leg 5-8 inches off the floor. Count to two before returning to basic plank position. Repeat on the other side.

Two-Point Plank

Start in basic plank position. Raise one leg and the opposite arm simultaneously. Hold your abdominal muscles tight. Keep your back and shoulders level with the floor to avoid twisting. This plank is especially good for the multifidus muscles that run along the spine.

Up and Down Plank

Start in basic plank position. Straighten both arms simultaneously by pushing against the floor. Avoid locking your arms at your elbow. Lower yourself slowly on to one forearm while slightly bending the other arm. Lower yourself slowly on to the other forearm to return to basic plank position.

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Spiderman Plank

Start in basic plank position with your forearms on the floor. Draw one knee toward your elbow as far as you can without twisting or moving your upper torso. Push your heel back toward the starting position. Avoid allowing your foot to touch the floor before drawing your knee towards your elbow again. Repeat by drawing the other knee towards your elbow.

Side Plank with a Twist

Lie on your side with your knees straight. Push up on your elbow and forearm. Raise your hips until your body forms a straight line from your head to your ankles. Extend your arm to the ceiling. Bring your arm down under your body, twisting your upper body as you reach behind you. Hold the twist for two seconds, then rotate back to the starting position.

EDUCATION SECTION

.....INJURY MANAGEMENT

Traumatic calf injury

The calf is usually injured with sudden movements that dorsiflex the ankle while weight bearing. This often happens with the knee straight as the muscle is then stretched over two joints. Activities like rapid lunges (common during racquet sports) or acceleration to sprint when running are common causes of a calf injury. It may also occur when the muscle is fatigued after distance running.

During a calf injury many people describe a sudden sensation of being struck on the back of the leg. Swelling is common and it can be difficult to walk initially. In more minor calf injuries people can sometimes continue with their sport at the time of the injury but the pain becomes more severe after.

Management of acute calf injury involves PRICE: **P**rotect **R**est **I**ce **C**ompression **E**levation (formerly RICE). With muscle injuries, anti-inflammatory medications are not currently recommended, especially in the first 48 hours as they are thought to delay healing. As with all injuries I recommend seeing an appropriate health professional. In the case of calf injuries this is especially important as there is a risk of Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT). Symptoms of DVT include pain, swelling and tenderness in the calf often accompanied by warmth and

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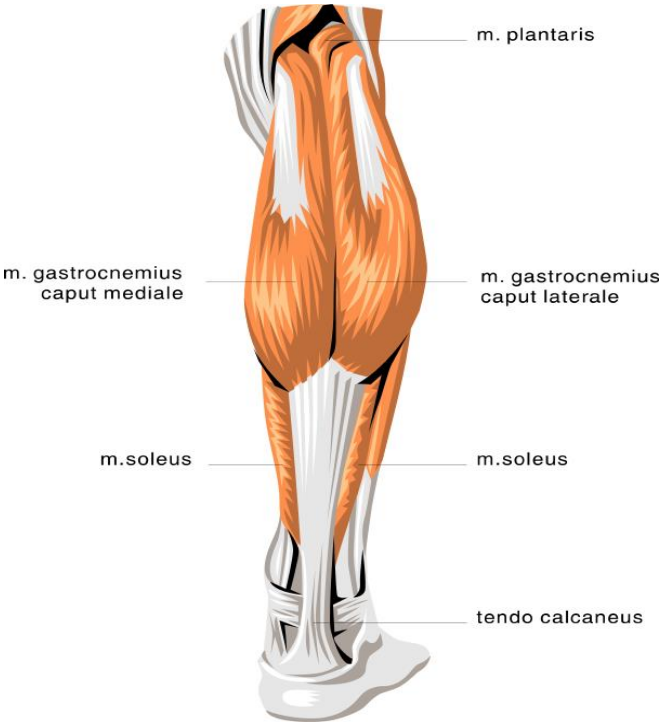
redness of the skin. If in doubt get it checked out.

Treatment of a calf injury depends largely on severity but I follow these principles;

- Respect the healing process
- Allow a period of relative rest
- Maintain calf flexibility and strength where possible but exercise within pain limits
- Gradually re-introduce activity that involves stretching or loading the calf muscle
- Rehab any deficits that exist after the healing process (this might include calf strength, power, endurance or bulk, reduced calf flexibility, altered movement control etc.)



With a minor calf injury symptoms will be mild with minimal swelling. You will be able to walk unaided with slight discomfort but sudden movements that stretch or work the calf may cause an increase in pain. Initial treatment involves rest for 2-3 days after which you can often resume gentle cross training, providing it's pain free. This might include swimming or cycling (with low resistance) but should avoid impact, heavy resistance or sudden movements. Once symptoms settle you can start some light jogging on a treadmill and see how it feels before gradually returning to training. The timeframe for this varies from around 1-4 weeks depending on the injury and the individual. When you do return to running avoid hill training and speed work initially as this places a greater stress on the calf muscle.

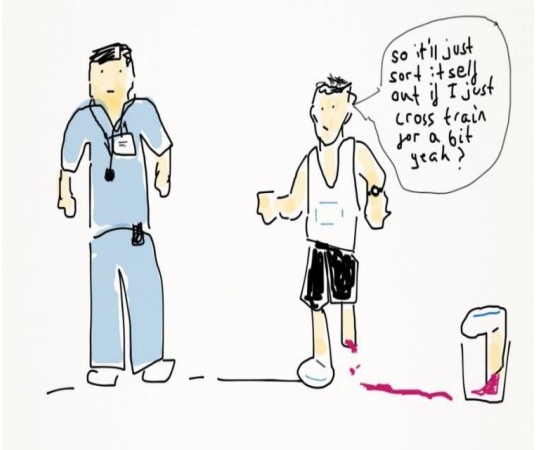
Moderately severe calf injuries need to be treated with more caution and medical advice should be taken. In the early stages there will be noticeable swelling and discomfort. You will be able to walk unaided but with some difficulty and pain. Any movements that place even a small stress on the calf are likely to be painful.

The first 2-3 days are likely to involve bleeding within the muscle and significant swelling. In these acute stages you'll need to be more attentive to rest, elevation and ice and I wouldn't recommend cross training. You may benefit from offloading the calf a little. This can be done by putting a heel wedge in your shoe, strapping the calf or even wearing shoes with a heel (although probably something stable rather than stilettos!). This should be a short term strategy and you should aim to walk in normal shoes or barefoot as soon as is comfortable.

By days 4-7 you may find you're comfortable enough to start gentle exercises for the calf. Simply move the foot up and down, first with the knee bent, then with it straight. Move only as far as comfortable – don't push through pain. Little and often is usually best – around 10-15 reps 3 times per day. The aim is to encourage the muscle to contract and relax. This should help clear swelling and maintain flexibility.

After day 7 you're usually in the sub-acute phase of injury. The muscle is still healing and that new tissue will be vulnerable so you want to avoid excessive stress on it.

From approximately day 7 to 21 post injury scar tissue is still developing but isn't usually strong enough to handle large loads. As a result I would avoid static stretches during this period. An alternative is a mini-squat to maintain ankle mobility or you can also start some supported calf raises if able – do on both feet (rather than just 1) – push up onto your toes and slowly lower. You can usually resume cross training from 2-3 weeks post injury but keep it pain free and avoid impact and resistance work.



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WHERE HAVE I BEEN?

Answers by email...first right answer for a half price session!

Prepare, Prevent, Perform

Sports Massage uses many of the characteristics of Swedish Massage whilst incorporating remedial and deep tissue massage techniques on specific troublesome or well used muscle groups. Although given the term "Sports", the massage technique is used for muscle problems whether incurred in a sporting event or through other activities such as gardening, decorating, DIY, etc.

Sports massage can be used before, during and after sporting events. The main emphasis on treatments is to maintain the body in good condition or to address specific needs where a client is suffering from aches and pains in certain muscles. When muscles have been overworked, causing soreness, stiffness, a sports massage can alleviate these conditions through boosting the circulatory and immune system thereby leaving the client feeling refreshed and relaxed.

Wendy is a qualified sports massage therapist holding a Sports Performance Services Level 4 Diploma and a Level 2 Triathlon Coach Certificate as well as being a keen athlete herself.

Current Offer

3 x 45 minute sessions for £99

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