

24 WAYS TO SOOTHE SORE MUSCLES

Whether we're hitting the links, swimming laps, or cultivating our gardens, we often move more in summer. We asked experts to share their best ideas for preventing aches, pain, and stiffness.

as told to STEPHANIE ANDERSON WITMER

MOVEMENT

Sore muscles respond to movement and physical manipulation. Gently kneading and moving your body to lengthen tight muscles can help reduce aches and pains.

→ **Stretch:** Take time before and after any physical activity to stretch your muscles. If you've been sitting around all winter, try a Figure-4 Stretch, standing quad stretches, and Pigeon Pose (with props, if desired), to release stiff hips.

→ **Self-massage:** Use a tennis ball to massage sore muscles. Sit, stand, or lie with your body against a firm surface. Press the ball between the surface and the muscle you're targeting. Lean into it; roll the ball around to reach different parts of the muscle. You can also roll it like a rolling pin over sore spots.

→ **Manual lymph drainage:** This practice can reduce swelling in overworked muscles—especially in your legs. Massage excess fluids toward the lymph nodes in the groin, armpits, and around the neck. Use the proximal-distal-proximal approach: Massage the areas closest (proximal) to the lymph drains in the

torso, groin, and armpit first, then the farthest (distal) from them, then closest again.

Kiera Nagle, MA, licensed massage therapist and director of Asian Holistic Health & Massage Therapy, Pacific College of Health and Science

NUTRITION

These antioxidant-rich foods have anti-inflammatory properties, which may play a role in muscle recovery.

→ **Spinach** is very high in magnesium, which may ease inflammation and prevent soreness. It also helps produce serotonin, a hormone that relaxes the central nervous system. Other magnesium-rich foods include pumpkin seeds, lima beans, tuna, brown rice, almonds,

avocados, dark chocolate, yogurt, and bananas.

→ **Tart cherry juice** may reduce post-exercise inflammation and soreness, particularly in people with arthritis. It's high in vitamin C and antioxidants.

→ **Ginger's** anti-inflammatory properties may reduce muscle pain. Add it to vegetable dishes and smoothies, or steep fresh ginger to make tea.

→ **Turmeric** contains curcumin, another anti-inflammatory antioxidant. When cooking with turmeric, add a dash of black pepper; it improves the root's bioavailability.

Lisa Young, PhD, registered dietitian, nutritionist, adjunct professor at New York University, and author of Finally Full, Finally Slim

TOPICAL REMEDIES

Instead of reaching for painkillers, try holistic methods to help the body repair itself.

→ **Epsom salts** dissolved into a warm bath reduce cramps and inflammation to soothe muscles because they're rich in magnesium. Applying magnesium lotion daily can also help.

→ **Tiger Balm**, the classic salve from Singapore, has a potent mix of herbal ingredients such as camphor and menthol which give the skin a cooling and warming sensation and improve circulation.

→ **CBD rubs:** Cannabidiol (CBD) functions as an antioxidant, decreases inflammation, and relieves pain. Look for CBD products labeled "broad-spectrum," which means they contain cannabis plant elements but no THC.

→ **Essential oils** can help reduce soreness. Mint is analgesic, lavender is relaxing, and ginger has a warming effect on muscles. Add one to two drops to a neutral carrier oil before using the mixture for self-massage.

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