

Blueprints for Change

ARE YOUR MUSCLES “SORE” AT YOU?

You tried to impress your clubmates with an over-exuberant workout ... now you're suffering the consequences. The following may help relieve the pain and restore your “macho/machisma”.

If I had to choose one homeopathic remedy to keep on hand, it would be **arnica** (*Arnica montana*). Arnica is most helpful when there is any type of bruising. It helps prevent the bruise and also eases soreness. It can come to the rescue when your muscles are sore from overexertion. I personally find it most helpful after a particularly energetic session of “Energy Yoga”. An herbal form of arnica for topical use is available in cream and tincture form.

Also helpful for those joint and muscle pains is **cayenne** (*Capsicum annuum*). The active ingredient – capsaicin – blocks the neurotransmitter that is responsible for sending pain signals to nerves in the skin and spinal cord. A topical cream can be applied two to four times daily.

White willow bark contains salicylates and thus possesses anti-inflammatory properties. Available in tablets or capsules, it can be used like aspirin (without the possible stomach upset) for sore joints or muscles. The first time I suggested to my husband that he try it, he said “Are you a witch?” and then asked if it needed to be mixed with “eye of newt” and “lizard’s gizzards”!!! Another herb with a strong anti-inflammatory effect is **Boswellia** (*Boswellia serrata*).

Both **peppermint oil** and **menthol** have been shown to reduce pain when applied topically. They are commonly used as creams and gels for muscle pain and spasms.

Bromelain (the digestive enzyme found in pineapple) helps reduce pain and swelling. It can also help control the inflammation process after an injury. Double-blind trials have shown that proteolytic enzymes such as bromelain, papain and trypsin speed the recovery of athletic injuries.

The supplement **MSM** (methylsulfonylmethane) has potent anti-inflammatory effects and is a natural source of the mineral sulfur which promotes ligament and tendon health.

Adequate levels of **potassium** are required to prevent muscle cramps and assist with muscle contraction; nerve conduction; glucose, protein and carbohydrate metabolism; kidney and adrenal function; and water balance. Excessive sweating can lead to the loss of a high amount of potassium.

Magnesium is the second most abundant mineral in the cells after potassium and is required for hundreds of enzymatic reactions. This includes energy production, nerve impulses, muscle contraction and relaxation and bone formation. A potassium-magnesium-bromelain combination relieves muscle fatigue and lactic acid buildup.

Massages and warm baths should not be left off the list. Try a combination of **eucalyptus, peppermint and lavender** in a warm bath or on a compress to stimulate a nourishing flow of blood to the area and reduce pain.

So next time you find muscles you didn't know you had after an enthusiastic workout, give one of the above a try. You'll be glad you did and your body will thank you! And no, I'm not a witch!!!

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