



Are You a Sore Winner or Loser?

Howdy [SweatCommunity](#),

You're sore. You're hating life. Every time you sit down, stand up, or go up/down stairs, you're cursing your coach/trainer/self for what they've put your body through the other day.

Soreness happens. In fact, it happened to me last weekend. My knee is finally feeling strong, so I ran my first full-speed sprints in a year (applause). I ran about 40 sprints, which was probably about 37 more than I should have because the next 3 days were SORE.

When you're sore, all day long there's only one thought in your head: get rid of this soreness. How do you do this? Go back in time and lighten your workout a bit, duh.

Well, I don't know about you, but I don't have access to time-travel just yet. So for all of us time-bound people, let's talk about why we're sore and what we can do next to get back to normal as quickly as possible.

Why Am I Sore?

Because you pushed yourself and got a great workout! You're sore because you woke up some muscles that you haven't used in a while (or ever). Don't worry, it's natural to be sore and is all part of getting into a new exercise routine.

After a workout, especially a new program, your muscles go through a process called *Delayed Onset Muscle Soreness*, or DOMS for short. DOMS is best characterized by the soreness and stiffness felt hours or days after an unaccustomed or strenuous workout, especially eccentric training (muscle lengthening). DOMS is felt most strongly 24-72 hours after the training. The reason you are sore is because you are breaking down your muscles during training, causing "micro-tears" in your muscle fibers. The result of these micro-tears is that your muscles will repair these tears and grow back stronger in the next couple of days. Yes, you are left with a little soreness initially, but your muscles will soon evolve to repair themselves quicker each time and you will be less and less sore as you get used to your new routine.

Ask any [bootcamper](#) and they'll tell you the first couple weeks are rough, but once you get past it, the reward is awesome! Soon, you'll be sprinting, jumping, and strength training to your limits and not even be sore the next day. Stick with it, your soreness is just a phase until your body adapts!

OK I Get It, but What Do I Do About this Soreness?

I hate to break it to you, but you're just gonna have to deal with it. There's a couple things you can do to speed up the recovery process, but you're going to have a bit of soreness for a couple days. Here's a couple tips to get back to neutral as quickly as possible:

1.) Protein and Water

Your muscles need to recover. Muscles need protein to repair themselves. So increase your protein intake while you're sore by getting a little extra meat, dairy, nuts, eggs, beans into your diet. Your muscles also need good hydration, so drink plenty of water to speed up recovery.

2.) Active Recovery

As much as you want to just sit still until your soreness passes, the fastest way to loosening up your muscles is to get moving again. If you're extremely sore, don't go through a highly strenuous workout the next day; you run the risk of overworking your compromised muscles and even straining them. Instead, go through a light workout just to get the blood flowing and muscles lubricated. A nice 10-15 minute dynamic warm-up of high knees, skips, lunges, squats, shuffles, butt-kickers, jumping jacks, jump rope, jogging, biking is perfect. Once you get a sweat going, stretch (but don't overstretch until it hurts!) your muscles thoroughly. You can also try foam-rolling or massaging sore spots to help relieve tension in the soft tissue.

3.) Hot/Cold Therapy

An ice bath or cold shower is a good way post-workout to help your muscles recover from inflammation. If you know you have a game, marathon, or performance coming up in the near future, an ice bath will go a long way towards refreshing your body, especially right after a tough workout.

Alternately, a hot shower or tub is great for loosening up tight muscles. I don't recommend hot therapy right after a tough workout, since your body needs time to cool down and go through the natural healing process. Instead, hot therapy is best a day later, especially when you are at your stiffest or before your next workout. Warming your body up in the shower/tub is a similar effect to active recovery, as it relaxes your muscles and promotes blood flow. Remember to lightly stretch afterwards.

If you're brave enough, you can attempt alternating hot/cold treatment. Go back and forth every few minutes between hot and cold, which should open blood vessels more and usher out lactic acid build-up. Don't do this for more than 20 minutes at a time, though.

Most Importantly...

Don't get discouraged by soreness! It's very easy to feel defeated after getting your butt-kicked. But it's exactly the opposite... you were so motivated to succeed that you pushed yourself hard! You're sore and feel terrible, but now you've been through the hardest part. You've suffered the punishment for avoiding exercise all these weeks/months/years. Now reward yourself by sticking with your routine and getting in phenomenal shape! Be a sore winner, not a sore loser!

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