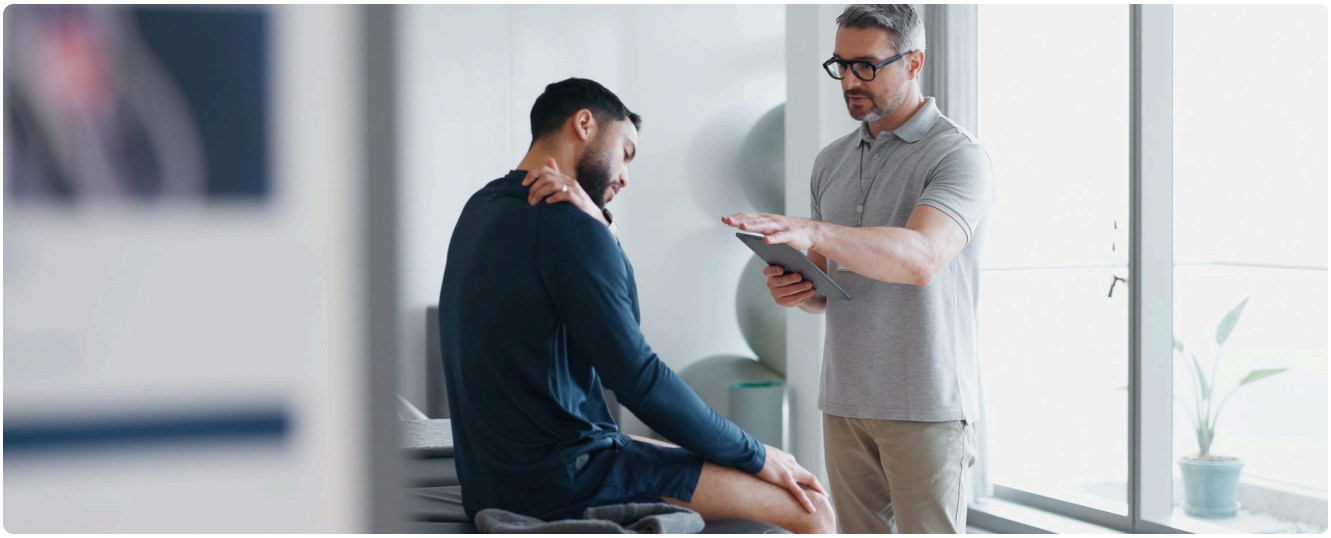
Soreness or injury?

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Normal soreness is a dull ache in the muscles you trained that starts a day or so later and fades within a few days. Pain that is sharp, in a joint, on one side only, or getting worse is a different matter.

Why it matters: Treating soreness like an injury makes people stop training they could have continued. Treating an injury like soreness can turn a small problem into a long one.

How to tell them apart

Usually soreness	Check it out
Dull, achy, stiff	Sharp, stabbing or burning
In the muscles you trained	In a joint, tendon or bone
Both sides about the same	One side, one spot
Starts a day or so later	Started suddenly during a rep
Eases as you warm up	Gets worse as you move
Fades over a few days	Lasts beyond a week or keeps returning
No swelling or bruising	Swelling, bruising, a pop, or weakness

The timing of normal soreness is covered in "Why your muscles get sore."

Training while sore

- Light activity, such as walking or an easy bike, often helps sore muscles feel better for a while.

- Train other muscle groups, or train the sore ones lightly.
- If moving well is hard, skip that exercise for a session.

Training around a minor ache

- **Change the exercise** to one that doesn't hurt, such as a machine instead of a barbell, or a shorter range of motion.
- **Lower the weight** until the movement is pain-free.
- **Stop if pain rises** during the set or session.
- **Keep the rest of your training going,** so a sore shoulder doesn't stop leg day.
- **See a health professional** if it doesn't improve within a week or two, or if it keeps coming back.

Get medical care promptly

- A pop or tearing feeling, with swelling or bruising.
- You can't put weight on a leg or use an arm normally.
- Numbness, tingling, or weakness that doesn't settle.
- Severe muscle pain and swelling with dark, cola-colored urine after exercise.
- Chest pain, pressure, dizziness or unusual shortness of breath.

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