



## Managing Calf Strains

The calf muscles (Soleus and Gastrocnemius) run down the back of the lower leg from the back of the knee to the back of your heel. Injuries to the calf are common in sports involving running, acceleration or changes in direction such as football, basketball and hockey. Injury can also occur through gradual wear and tear, occasionally straining whilst simply walking across the road.

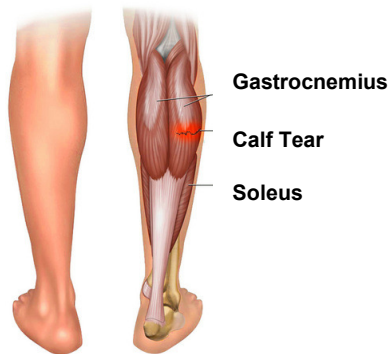
Early treatment of a strained calf can help to speed recovery and minimize the symptoms.

### Symptoms

- A sudden sharp pain at the back of the lower leg during exercise.
- May feel like you have been hit in the leg and potentially hear a “pop”.
- Pain on stretching.
- Difficulty walking properly or standing on toes.
- Swelling and bruising may be present.

### Severity of a Pulled Calf

Strains are graded 1, 2 or 3 depending on severity. Grade 1 consists of minor tears within the muscle. Tightness may be felt in the back of the lower leg but little other discomfort. A grade 2 is a partial tear in the muscle. Moderate discomfort will be felt with walking and



there is limited ability to perform activities, such as running and jumping. Grade 3 is a severe or complete rupture of the muscle. Walking is severely affected and crutches may be needed.



### Acute Management

It is vitally important that treatment for a pulled calf starts immediately following injury. The most important phase for treatment is the first 48 hours post-injury. Early management will have you pain-free faster.

Suggestions for immediate treatment of a pulled calf include:

- Stop your activity.
- Rest the injured leg.
- Use icepacks every two hours, applied for 15 minutes.
- Bandage the calf firmly with an elasticized bandage.
- Elevate the leg above heart height whenever possible.
- Avoid exercise, heat, alcohol and massage in the first 48 hours, as these can all exacerbate swelling and tissue damage.

### Professional help

If the pain from a grade 1 calf tear that you are managing yourself has not improved after a day or so, or it is a more severe grade 2 or 3 tear, it is best to seek medical advice and consult with Jubilee Sports Physiotherapy to get an accurate diagnosis of the injury and suggest the most appropriate treatment plan.

### Physiotherapy provides rehabilitation and support

Physiotherapy treatment will depend upon the severity of the injury. Treatments may include soft tissue therapy to reduce scarring and promote faster healing and strengthening and stretching exercises to rehabilitate the injured muscle. Weaknesses in core strength, muscle imbalances and predisposing biomechanical abnormalities should be assessed and corrected.

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