

DOMS! All Your Questions Answered

That feeling when you do a workout and you feel great, and then the next day you feel like you have been hit by a truck... All your muscles are stiff and sore, it hurts to move and you find it hard to sit down and stand up. What is that?

That my friend, is called DOMS, or Delayed Onset Muscle Soreness. And it is completely normal, especially if you are just getting back into exercise or have done something different that you do not usually do. There are a few questions I often get asked in regards to muscle soreness post exercise...

If I didn't get DOMS, does that mean I didn't work hard enough?

Is there any way to avoid DOMS?

What is the best way to recover from DOMS?

Let's start with... What is DOMS? Delayed onset muscle soreness is stiffness and soreness in the muscles after exercise. It is caused from tiny micro tears in the muscle fibres, causing inflammation. Now I know that sounds bad, muscles tears, but it isn't. As the muscle repairs, it repairs stronger. And that is how our muscles adapt to exercise and why we don't get DOMS after EVERY session.

If I didn't get DOMS, did I not work hard enough? Answer is no. You can still have an awesome session and not feel that same soreness afterwards. Not being sore is actually a really positive thing because it means your muscles are coping better with the exercise requirements and you are getting stronger. DOMS usually occurs when you first start training again after a long break, if you do something different to what you are used to, or you increase the weight or intensity that you have previously been training at.

Is there any way to avoid DOMS? Yes and no. You can slowly ease into exercise, change your training program and progress slowly to allow your muscles time to adapt. And a proper cool down is very important in trying to avoid that muscle stiffness. But ultimately, you will, from time to time, experience DOMS. Doing these things will lead to slightly less soreness and stiffness, rather than that, "I can't get down the stairs because my legs don't work", soreness. Just remember, it doesn't last forever, it will get better.

What is the best way to recover from DOMS? Funny enough... movement. I know it might seem impossible but the more you move those sore muscles, the less stiff they will be. I'm not saying you jump straight back into another high intensity workout, but light movement is great. Walking, swimming or a light, easy bike ride are good options. Deep tissue massage and heavy stretching should be avoided early on. But light massage and stretching can be introduced once the muscles begin to loosen up.

DOMS usually peaks 24-48 hours after a workout but can last for up to 72 hours. Remember that it is temporary, and will not happen after EVERY session. Keep moving but also use it as an excuse to have a nice relaxing bath 💎💎