



Sore... or Injured?

An evidence-informed guide from Strength With Purpose

Aches and pains are part of being human.

When you start exercising — or increase intensity — it's completely normal to feel something.

But not all discomfort means the same thing.

Understanding the difference helps you train confidently — and safely.

What Is Normal Muscle Soreness?

- Starts 12–24 hours after exercise
- Peaks at 24–72 hours
- Feels dull, stiff or tender
- Sits in the muscle (not deep in a joint)
- Often affects both sides
- Improves with gentle movement

What Might Suggest Injury?

- Sharp pain during movement
- Pain localised in a joint
- Swelling or bruising
- Worsening over several days

- Doesn't improve with movement
- Interferes with sleep
- Numbness or weakness

Pattern Matters

Pain that improves with movement is often muscular. Pain that worsens or feels unstable deserves attention. Understanding the pattern reduces fear and prevents pushing through something that needs care.

Protective Pain

Sometimes discomfort isn't damage — it's your nervous system being cautious. New or unfamiliar movement can feel threatening, even when it's safe.

If You're Unsure

Reduce load, modify movement, and monitor for 48–72 hours. If it improves, continue carefully. If it worsens, seek assessment.

Why Early Assessment Matters

Physiotherapists can assess tissue, identify issues early, and guide safe progression. Seeking advice is not a weakness — it's smart training.

Final Thought

Soreness can be normal. Pain can be informative. Strong people don't just train hard — they train wisely.

Important: This is general information only and not a substitute for personalised advice. If symptoms persist, seek professional guidance.