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**Post-Hiking Pain**

**By Louise Roach**

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Calves are burning, knees hurt and legs feel like Jello. After a major hike, the body is asking, "why the torture?" How to deal with post-hiking pain and recovery is something every hiker faces as they advance to more strenuous levels.

For day-hikers, backpackers and trail runners, after-care for pain is a very real part of the sport. Injuries and lactic acid build-up can keep a hiker sidelined for days and make the simple act of going down stairs excruciating. Many precautions can be taken to ensure less stress to legs, knees and feet during a hike, but as every seasoned hiker knows, it's not going uphill that's the problem it's coming down!

Hiking down a steep descent places additional stress on knees and muscles that have not been conditioned for downhill activity. Joints and tendons become painfully inflamed. And pushing past ones level of ability and distance, increases the production of lactic acid, resulting in a burning feeling in leg muscles. Don't let pain be a discouraging factor in pursuing higher achievements on the trail. The sense of loftiness felt when reaching the pinnacle of a climb is worth conquering post-hiking pain.

Pre-hiking suggestions to minimize pain: Get fitted with sturdy, stable boots or trail running shoes. Buy shoes/boots that are at ½ to 1 full size larger than your regular shoe size. After several hours of hiking, feet will swell and need room to expand. Wear socks made of Coolmax® for moisture control and to minimize blisters. Pre-condition legs weeks before a strenuous hike by doing short hill hikes and strengthening exercises (squats, lunges, step-ups and step-downs). You can also increase your lactic acid threshold and level of fatigue (thereby lowering the occurrence of sore muscles) by increasing your activity level and training at 85%–90% of your maximum heart rate for at least 20 minutes daily. Use stretching exercises for problem areas such as hamstring, IT band, etc. to increase flexibility. If needed, wear leg braces to stabilize knees and help reduce stress. Neoprene braces can be purchased over the counter at any drug store. Stay hydrated and eat carbohydrates and protein during and after the hike. This can help minimize lactic acid build-up. Use a hiking pole(s) to

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redistribute weight, help with balance and reduce stress on the knees. Learn the technique of heel-to-toe walking so as to make full contact with heel to the ground. Try to control uphill and downhill progression so as not to bound, go too fast, or "pound" the trail. Slightly bend knees when descending. Make a conscious effort to keep weight centered with the knee tracking directly over the toe (no twisting in or out). An automatic response to descending a hill is to lean backwards, rather than stay centered. This can result in injury, such as IT Band Friction Syndrome.

Post-hiking suggestions for dealing with pain: Ice painful or swollen joints and muscles immediately after a hike. If pain persists, continue at intervals for up to 48 hours. Icing will decrease inflammation, reduce swelling and numb pain. Rest after the hike, but don't become immobile. Walking or light exercise will keep blood flowing and increase recovery. Gentle stretches will help stiff, tight muscles. Massage painful muscles with long, smooth movements. If needed, use a nonsteroidal antiinflammatory drug (NSAID), such as ibuprofen, to reduce pain and inflammation. Some hikers benefit from alternating ice packs and heat therapy. This should only be done after 48 hours and

inflammation has subsided. Applying heat immediately after a hike will increase swelling and prolong recovery time.

Disclaimer: This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical treatment or consultation. Always consult with your physician in the event of a serious injury.

Louise Roach is the editor of on-line health and fitness newsletter, NewsFlash\*SnowPack found at

. She has been instrumental in the development of SnowPack, a

patented cold therapy that exhibits the same qualities as ice. Her injury prevention and treatment articles have been published on numerous health and fitness websites. Louise is also an avid hiker. For more information visit:

### **What Should You Know About Hiking Boots?**

**By Diana Claire**

What is essential equipment for you when going on a hiking? Beside, your backpack, you also have to consider about your footwear. You will be suffering when you are not using your footwear properly. It seems all physical activity, especially hiking need good footwear.

#### Physical Activity Need Good Boots

Ask your friends to hike with you! Hiking is one of the way to know more about your friends and also a good way to make your body and your spirit healthy. There are more you get though; but all of that will fade away if you don't wear good hiking boots. Understand that all outdoor physical activity will be enjoyable if you wear good boots. As people said, if you're nice to your feet, the rest of your body will feel good—especially during a hike.

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Whatever your outdoor physical activity, either a light day hike to a three-pack or four-day pack trip, your hiking boots makes the difference. Hiking boots is one of the most important pieces of gear when hiking. To keep your feet comfortable, you must wear a boot that fit with your feet boot to avoid blister and foot-injury.

### Choosing Your Boots

How to find a good hiking boots for your feet to make you comfortable. Well, here are some check lists you might want to know about hiking boots:

- Decide what type of hiking boot you want to choose. You can find two types of boots on the market, leather boots and lightweight hiking boots. Leather boots are more expensive, but they are tend to be more durable and last longer, and can be waterproofed. Lightweight boots tend to be more breathable, more comfortable, cheaper, and require a shorter break-in time. Even though, most important for both types of boots should have good ankle support.
- Don't choose the hiking boots of your normal size. You have to go up a 2 size with your normal shoe size. When you put on your hiking boot, you should be able to put a finger between your foot and the heel of the boot since your feet swell as they warm up.
- If you want to try hiking boots, do it when you have warm feet. Walk at least half mile before you try it on. That way your foot will be more the size it will be when you are actually hiking.
- Don't forget to wear two hiking socks. It's the best way to prevent blisters and an uncomfortable foot while hiking. Two pairs of socks will not only give you good padding, but will also wick the moisture away from your foot as well.
- Once you have the shoe on, lace the boot up. Don't lace it too tightly, but just snugly. Walk around the store and see how they feel. In particular, make sure that your heel can slide around slightly. The boot should be comfortable but stiff.
- Your toes should not hit the front of the boot too much. To simulate walking down a hill bang the toe

of the boot on the ground or against a wall. Your toe shouldn't hit the front of the boot too easily. If it does, either your boot is too small or your laces aren't snug enough. Your boots should feel a little big.

### Get Your Boots through Internet

Okay' now you know some information about this hiking boots. You can find various kind of hiking boots in retailer shop. But the easiest ways to find your hiking boots are buying over the Internet. You will be comfortable choosing the right boots for your right. Different kind of boots will be displayed in different Website, and you can find what boots best for your interest. You are going to get more boots which you can compare.

Diana Claire lifelong for footwear led her became footwear reviewer. She has tried different kind of

footwear, and she put her review at MyShoesGuide.com. Visit her Website

. You can also visit her

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