

## Men's Fitness

**Q. The day after playing football I feel really stiff, to the point where I find it hard to get out of bed in the morning. Is there anything I can do to prevent this?**

**A.** The symptoms\* suggest that you do little or no other regular physical activity except play football. As your condition is often found the morning after a game, you may need to improve your fitness.

Your training should mimic football movements. A conditioning programme, gradually increasing in intensity over a period of time will help. Light jogging should progress over several days or weeks and include variable speed interval running (Fartlek) to more intense speed work. Short passing ball work would be useful if training with a partner. New activities should be introduced gradually rather than all at once.

While building your fitness and to help your recovery, you should check your pre and post exercise hydration levels. Urine colour is the best guide; pale straw coloured = well hydrated, dark yellow=dehydrated. Re-hydration does take time. So, if you consume more than one litre of fluid in one hour, the body generally will expel this with little benefit being gained. Alcohol, tea/coffee and most carbonated drinks also have adverse effects by ridding the body of fluid, so defeating the object. If possible use isotonic drinks. These will also help the body to realign levels of electrolytes lost during exercise. Failing this, water, little and often, will suffice.

A post match 'Cool Down' is further advised – i.e a short slow jog of 10-15 minutes followed by a general stretching regime covering the main muscle groups of the lower body – lower back, hamstrings, quadriceps, adductor (groin) and calves.

After hard exercise why not pamper yourself with a sports massage. A recent study in the British Journal of Sports Medicine showed that massage taken 20 minutes after exercise helped alleviate some post exercise pain within 48 hours.

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\* **NB** Certain specific medical conditions can give rise to muscle soreness. If in doubt or symptoms persist or increase seek medical advice.

\*\* This article contains general advice only. Joel Harris and The Society of Sports Therapists cannot be held liable for action taken in response to this article.

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