

Muscle Soreness Does Not Mean You Had A Better or Worse Workout

A question that gets emailed to me a lot. "My muscles used to always be sore the day or 2 after a workout, but lately I've had pretty much no muscle soreness at all. Does that mean I didn't have a good workout? Was it all a waste? If I'm not sore the day after, does that mean I didn't increase muscle or strength?" And sometimes it's a slightly different version of the same question... "Why am I only sore after some workouts and not others? Were those workouts less effective than the others?" Whichever way it is asked, it seems that people tend to equate muscle soreness with workout effectiveness. If you happen to be one of these people, you're about to learn why you shouldn't. Over training can be more harmful than helpful in the long run.

Muscle soreness is not, I repeat, is NOT an indicator of a good workout. Sore muscles the day after does not mean you had an effective workout or productive workout or a results-causing workout. Therefore, NOT being sore the day after doesn't mean your workout was bad, or ineffective, or unproductive, or useless. As far as effectiveness, muscle soreness means nothing.

So then, what's the deal? How come you only get sore some times and not others? How come you used to get sore every time, but now you hardly ever do? Well, it's all pretty simple. Muscle soreness usually occurs when you make your muscles do something that they just aren't used to doing. For example, when you first started working out, that was very likely when you experienced the most soreness. Forget the next day... you were probably sore for the entire next week! But then as your body gradually gets more accustomed to what you're doing, your body gradually experiences less and less muscle soreness until it reaches the point where you are barely sore or even not sore at all anymore the day(s) after a workout.



Gatorade can help replenish glycogen storage after a workout.



If you think you are Superman and beating your body into submission day in and day out is the only way to get gains... you are in for a short fitness life and allot of injury.



Fruit is absolutely necessary for energy both before and after workouts not to mention it helps speed up recovery time for muscle rebuilding.



Train Smart and be Healthy. Listen to your body. Some days you should not be in the gym as long as others. Give your body a complete rest at least a week every 3 months to help your body rebuild and rest so you can be fresh and avoid being burnt out. This will help you avoid injury as well.

But this only explains the "why was I sore then, but not now" question. What about the "why was I sore after this chest workout, but not my last 10 chest workouts" question? Well, like I mentioned before, muscle soreness in the day or days following a workout is caused by your muscles having to do something they aren't used to doing. So, if your chest workout for the last 2 months has consisted of the flat bench press, incline bench press, and dumbbell flies, and this time you changed it to flat bench dumbbell press, decline bench press, and cable flies, there is a very good chance you'll be sore the next day. Was it because this workout or these exercises were better or more effective in some way?

Not at all. It was only because you changed something (in this case exercises), and in doing so you caused your body to do something it wasn't used to doing. This is what would cause muscle soreness. In time, it's very possible that this new workout may not cause you to be sore just like the original workout did. Is it not longer effective? Of course not... it's just that your body has become more and more used to doing it. It's not just changing exercises that may cause the muscles to be sore. It can be a change in the way you did the same exercises. Did you do more reps? Or maybe lift more weight? Were you on the treadmill or bike longer than last time? Did you increase intensity? Any of the above could be enough to cause muscle soreness the next day.

Another thing to keep in mind is that some people just get sore after certain workouts (no matter how long they've done them) and never get sore after others. For example, my chest is always sore for the 2 days following a chest workout. My biceps? Hardly ever. My hamstrings and quads? Always. My triceps? Barely, if anything. Sometimes if I change something I still don't get sore. However, my progress is just fine. Muscle soreness or not, my results are just the same. So, no... muscle soreness is in no way an indicator of a good or bad workout. If anything, it may just indicate you did something different in some way. Use a scale, a mirror, pictures, tape measure and/or workout log to judge whether or not what you're doing is actually working. Use muscle soreness as an excuse not to have to take out the garbage.