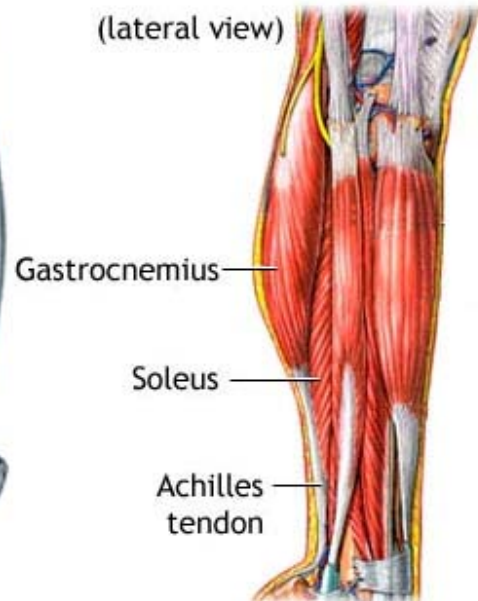
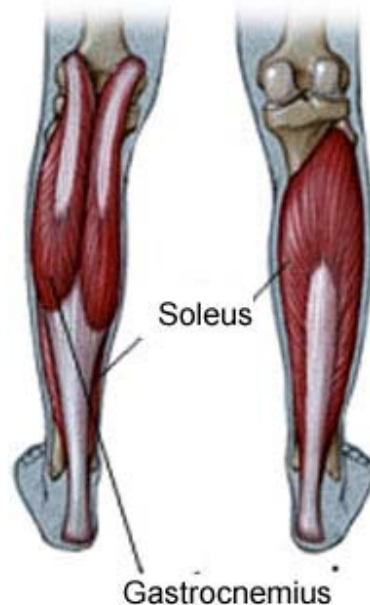
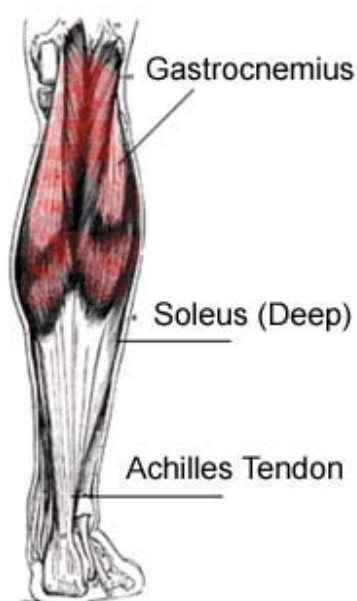


# Calf Strains

The calf consists of two muscles – the **gastrocnemius** and the **soleus**.

In layman's terms, the **gastrocnemius** is the two steaks at the top of the calf, while the **soleus** runs underneath those two steaks and down to the heel.

The Gastrocnemius muscle originates above the knee and inserts via the Achilles tendon into the heel. The Soleus originates below the knee and also inserts via the Achilles tendon.



## Symptoms of a calf strain include:

- A sudden pain at the back of the leg, particularly where the calf and Achilles tendon join.
- Feel like you've been hit from behind and have difficulty to sustain activity
- Hard to stand on tip-toe or contract muscle against resistance.
- Pain and swelling / bruising in the calf muscle.



## Calf Rehab:

Phase 1 - immediately after you have injured the leg.

**RICER – NO HARM** (Click Link)

**Rest – Ice – Compression – Elevation – Referral. No Heat; Alcohol; Running; Massage**

- **Rest** – Get off your feet
- **Ice** - this can be applied for 30 minutes every hour.
- **Compression** - apply a compression bandage to help reduce swelling and bleeding.
- **Elevation** - Elevating the leg will help swelling and blood run away from the injured muscle.
- **Referral** – Go and see an expert

### Phase 2 – Mobilisation & Strengthening

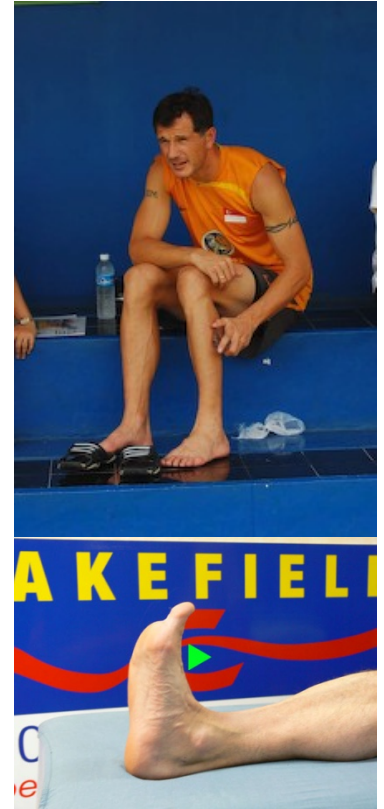
- **Gentle passive range of motion.** Pull your foot and toes back. Keep knees straight if possible to stretch the calf muscle. Hold for 10 secs and repeat 5 to 10 times.
- **Active stretching.** Pull your foot and toes up (using the muscles in the front of your leg) to stretch the calf muscle. Hold for 10 secs and repeat 5 to 10 times.
- **Progressive strengthening exercises.** Use a belt, or bike inner-tube, to hook around your foot to provide light resistance for exercising the calf muscles. Point your foot down against resistance and then allow it to come up again.
- **Calf Raises.** Begin seated and progress to standing. Roll from feet flat on the floor up onto your toes and slowly back down again. Once capable on two feet, try using only one. This may require support initially.

### Phase 3 – Impact loading

This phase can start when you can walk properly and can fully rise up onto your toes.

- **Start a progressive running programme.** Start walking, then try running for a minute, walking for a minute and build this up. Take it very slowly.
- **Skipping and Hopping.** Once you feel confident with calf raises begin light bouncing on your toes. A mini tramp will make things easier initially.
- **Stretching** - continuous stretching will be useful even after you think the injury has healed. Stretch for 30 seconds (in groups of 5) three times a day. Make stretching a habit.
- **Continue** to build on the strengthening by doing calf raises, gradually building up. Aim to be able to do 5 sets of 50 reps and more! Body weight is often sufficient, but for jumping sports and running it will be useful to add some extra weight for resistance. This should be added progressively.

The goal of rehab is to return to normal activity as quickly as possible without any long-term effects. If you return too soon, you risk developing a chronic injury. Everyone recovers at a different rate, and your rehab needs to be tailored to your needs and your progress **not** the calendar.



## Return to sport:

You can return to competition when you meet the following conditions:

- You have your physician's "okay."
- You are pain-free.
- You have no swelling.
- You have full range of motion (compared to the uninjured side).
- You have full or close to full (90 percent) strength (again, compare with the uninjured side)
- You can run and change directions without pain or limping.
- You can sprint straight ahead without pain or limping.
- You can hop on the injured leg without pain.

Related: [Brett Maher's Calf Rehab Program – With ex-36ERS physio Mike Woodcock](#) (pdf) (Click link)

For more injury-related articles and videos, visit [www.wakefieldsports.com.au/enews.cfm](http://www.wakefieldsports.com.au/enews.cfm)

