Soreness vs. Pain: The Difference

Length of Time Matters
The key thing to note when differentiating between soreness and pain is time. Natural soreness from physical activity has a much shorter duration soreness should last anywhere from one to three days, whereas pain may come on quickly while engaged in physical activity or shortly after. Any type of activity that places unaccustomed loads on muscle may lead to delayed onset muscle soreness (DOMS). This type of soreness is different from acute soreness, which is pain that develops during the actual activity. Delayed soreness typically begins to develop 12-24 hours after the exercise has been performed and may produce the greatest pain between 24-72 hours after the exercise has been performed.
Pain will typically linger past three days and make it difficult to partake in normal, daily activities. It is important to note that each individual's body reacts differently to the stresses of physical activity.

Post-Activity Pain vs. Soreness
After strenuous exercise, or exercise after a hiatus from physical activity, it is natural to experience muscle soreness. Typically, muscles are tender to the touch or burn slightly with movement. During exercise muscles are fatigued and the effects usually aren't felt until a day or two afterward. Micro tears in the muscle occur during exercise, which is what causes the dull aches, soreness and muscle weakness. Most people feel a peak of soreness the following day, and the discomfort gradually goes away. A red flag indicator of injury is when discomfort and sharp pain are persistent, whether you're resting or active.
If the pain persists past one to two weeks, or is immediate and severe, you may be experiencing a more serious injury.

Ways to Stay Ahead of Soreness
Rest, hydration and proper nutrition play important roles in helping muscles recover. Alternating activity types and allowing days of rest are key in helping your body stay ahead of soreness and avoid pain and injury.

Ways to Relieve Pain

Ice & Heat Therapy
Ice and heat therapy can often help relieve pain, depending on the severity of the injury, when done properly. Ice can be applied to an acute or new injury, like a muscle or joint sprain. Ice helps constrict blood vessels to reduce swelling and pain. With ice therapy, you should be cautious about the amount of time you spend icing the injury. Best practice is to limit sessions to 20 minutes to avoid causing tissue or skin damage. Heat is typically used for chronic pain or conditions, old injuries and stiffness. Heat therapy is beneficial for stiff joints and muscle pain because it allows blood vessels to relax and increases circulation-having the opposite effect of ice therapy. Heat can be very soothing for tight muscles and painful joints, but it is not recommend applying heat to a fresh

injury. With heat therapy, limit sessions to 20 minutes and be mindful to the level of heat/how it is administered to avoid blisters and burns.

	Muscle Soreness	Pain
Type of Discomfort:	Tender when touching muscles, tired or burning feeling while exercising, minimal dull, tight and achy feeling at rest	Ache, sharp pain at rest or when exercising
Onset:	During exercise or 24-72 hours after activity	During exercise or within 24 hours of activity
Duration:	2-3 days	May linger if not addressed
Location:	Muscles	Muscles or joints
Improves With:	Stretching, following movement	Ice, rest
Worsens With:	Sitting still	Continued activity
Appropriate action:	Resume offending activity once soreness subsides	Consult with medical professional if pain is extreme or lasts >1-2 weeks