



DELAYED ONSET MUSCLE SORENESS (DOMS)

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One of the most common misconceptions by gym junkies is that a good workout must be accompanied by soreness and intense muscle aches the day after. This soreness is known as delayed onset muscle soreness (DOMS) – but did you know it's actually a myth?

DOMS happens when the human body is unable to deal with exercise-induced muscle damage. It becomes evident six to eight hours after physical activities and peaks around 24 to 48 hours after training. DOMS may result in reduced range of motion and joint stiffness, local swelling and tenderness, and diminished muscle strength.

The myth that DOMS indicates a good workout arises as most people are likely to experience DOMS after introducing a new training stimulus – like a new activity, increased intensity or volume. Exercises with a greater emphasis on the eccentric phase (lengthening or stretching phase) play the most significant role in the manifestation of DOMS. Hence, DOMS is not the best gauge of the effectiveness of a workout. The soreness will subside as the body gets used to the workout over time and learns to distribute the workload across muscle fibres more effectively.

This begets the question: if soreness does not indicate the effectiveness of a workout, then what does? Setting and achieving goals or beating personal bests is a consistent way of checking one's progress.

Last but not least, recovery is essential. Moderate aerobic exercise after strength training may help reduce DOMS and can even enhance the effect of lifting weights. Replicating the exercises with lighter weights will help with recovery as well.