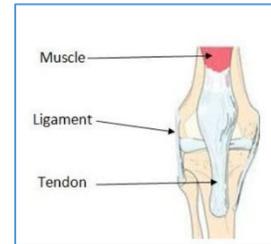




## Take Care of your Muscles and They'll Take Care of You!

Did you know there are more than 600 muscles in your body? Muscles help you move, lift, pump blood through your body, and breathe. Keeping your muscles healthy will help you safely perform your job and do the other things you love to do. Exercising, getting enough rest, and eating a balanced diet will help to keep your muscles healthy for life. Strong muscles also help to keep your joints in good shape. If the muscles around your knee, for example, get weak, you may be more likely to injure that knee. Strong muscles also help you keep your balance, so that you are less likely to slip or fall.

Your muscles are connected to your bones by tough cords of tissue called **tendons**. As the muscle contracts, it pulls on the tendon, which moves the bone. Bones are connected to other bones by **ligaments**, which are like tendons and help hold your skeleton together. The tendons connecting muscles to bones can be **strained** if they are pulled or stretched too much. If ligaments are stretched or pulled too much, the injury is a **sprain**.



**Move your muscles through physical activity.** Muscles that are unused become smaller and weaker; this is known as *atrophy*. When muscles work through physical activity, they respond by becoming stronger. Walking, jogging, lifting weights, and climbing stairs work your muscles. Swimming or biking are also great. It is vital that you work different muscles through a variety of activities. Aim for 60 minutes of activity per day. You may think that's a lot, but break it down into ten- or fifteen-minute increments.

**Eat a balanced diet.** You don't need a "special" diet to keep muscles in good health. Eating a *balanced diet* will help manage your weight and provide a variety of nutrients for your muscles and overall health. A balanced diet:

- Emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat dairy products like milk, cheese, and yogurt.
- Includes protein from lean meats, poultry, seafood, beans, eggs, and nuts.
- Is low in solid fats, saturated fats, cholesterol, sodium, added sugars, and refined grains.
- Is as low as possible in trans fats.
- Balances calories consumed with calories burned to help attain - and maintain - a healthy weight.



For more information on a healthy diet, see [www.choosemyplate.gov/](http://www.choosemyplate.gov/).

**Watch your posture when you lift or move heavy objects.** Keep your back straight and bend your knees to lift or move objects in order to protect the muscles in your back. Engage your "core" (stomach muscles) and let your legs, which contain the largest and strongest muscles in your body, hold the weight! Don't hesitate to ask for help.

**Start now.** It's never too late!