**Soothing Sore Muscles**

1. Light Stretching- Following participation in an intense physical activity, delayed onset muscle soreness (DOMS) may be experienced. To combat muscle tightness when you are sore, LIGHT stretching can decrease the tightness and increase range of motion. It is important to note that stretching will not heal or repair the muscles any faster, rather it will help you feel better while your body works to heal itself.
2. Self-Massage- The thought of massaging sore or achy muscles may not sound appealing but the benefit of self-massage (i.e. foam roller, massage stick) is that you can control the pressure. Massaging the sore muscle can help to break up tissue adhesions that may form during the heal and repair phase of the muscle and will also bring increased blood flow to the area which assists in speeding up the healing phase.
3. Heat- Although there is a lot of contradictory information out there right now in regards to applying heat vs. ice when experiencing muscular aches and pains it is most important to remember that there are benefits to both. If we look at applying heat (i.e. heating pad, warm bath), it is known that when muscle temperature is increased, blood flow increases and brings oxygenated blood with healing properties to the painful area. This increase in blood flow also helps to wash away the waste created during healing that is responsible for the aches and pains.
4. Hydrate, Hydrate, Hydrate- Research has shown that a dehydrated muscle is more likely to be sore following exercise and therefore if we remain hydrated before, during, and after exercise we can decrease the intensity of soreness experienced. The key points to take away here are that water assists in muscle flexibility and also helps in washing away the toxins or waste that builds up in the healing muscle and causes pain.
5. Rest- The pain felt with muscle soreness is the body’s way of letting us know that it needs time to heal itself. Complete rest, such as sleep, enhances muscle recovery through protein synthesis and human growth hormone release. However, please remember that rest does not mean that you should spend the next week couch surfing. Scaling back your exercise regime and incorporating some light cardiovascular exercise such as a brisk walk, swim, or bike ride will increase blood circulation therefore decreasing the chance for muscle stiffness to set in.