

Make smart financial decisions with DailyFinance

AOL health

GALLERIES

HEALTH DIET & FITNESS HEALTHY LIVING HEALTH ENCYCLOPEDIA DRUGS & SUPPLEMENTS TOOLS

[Send us a tip](#) [Contact us](#) [Advertise](#) [Corrections/Problems?](#)

THAT'S FIT WEB

[Main RSS Feed](#) [Category Feeds](#)

Do Sports Creams Really Work?

Posted: May 20th 2009 2:00PM by [Ashley Neglia](#)

Filed under: [Fitness](#)



Getty Images

Working out may be great for your mind and body, but a pulled muscle here or overworked tendon there happens to the best of us. Some of us wear our exercise injuries like badges of honor, while others are quick to reach for the bottle to get some relief.

Bengay, Icy Hot, ThermoCare. Chances are, even if you've never dabbled in the world of pain creams, you've seen them in the store and maybe even chuckled at a few of their names (Aspercreme, come on). But there are those among us who swear by their ability to dull pain with sensations of hot and cold, so a recent article in [The New York Times](#) posed the question, "Do sports creams rub the pain away?"

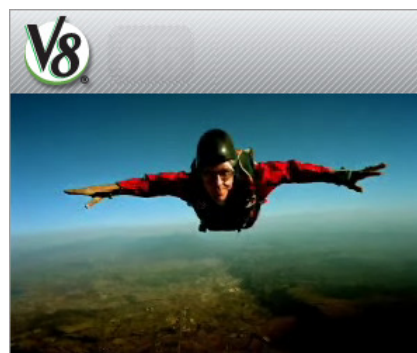
Most doctors and researchers interviewed for the piece pointed out that no physiological change to decrease pain occurs where creams are applied. They chalk up any experienced relief to the placebo effect, adding that sensations of hot and cold -- as enjoyable as they may be -- have no scientific way to heal an injury or reduce pain.

Only a handful of medical pain authorities argued that some topical analgesics do help alleviate pain and that application, persistency and patient expectations may play a role in relief.

That's Fit reached out to Pete McCall, spokesman for the American Council on Exercise and certified strength and conditioning specialist, to find out whether that tube of Bengay is really worth its salt.

"They do work. There's no doubt they work," says McCall. But there's a catch.

"Pain is there for a reason. That's to communicate something with your



That's Fit Features

the best life
with bob greene

Celebritynews

diet derailers

how many calories
?

jonny's take

the good the fat and the hungry



body," he says. "Pain is an important communication pathway in the body so you know something's wrong. Start masking it and working over it, for more."



Runners, tennis players and even some golfers tend to turn to topical creams to reduce pain and inflammation. "When you get into golf and tennis, you get a lot of rotational movement, torque. If you don't have proper flexibility you can aggravate a muscle strain," says McCall.

Instead of glossing over an injury (which could turn out to be serious) with an expensive topical cream, McCall suggests using ice to reduce inflammation and swelling and to remember this acronym: RICE. Rest. Ice. Compression. Elevation.

If that doesn't work, see your doctor before starting any over-the-counter medication regimen.

Do you use a sports cream or just plain ice for pain relief? Let us know what works for you.

Tags: [analgesic](#), [pain-cream](#), [sports-cream](#), [topical-cream](#)

[Permalink](#) | [Email this](#) | [Share](#) | [Comments](#) [0]

Sponsored Links

1 Rule of a Flat Stomach

I Cut Down 2 lbs of Stomach Fat Per Week by Obeying this 1 Old Rule! [JuliasWeightLossBlog.com](#)

My Wrinkles Vanished

Learn How a Mom Combined 2 Products to Get Rid of Wrinkles Instantly [AngiesWrinkles.com](#)

1 RULE for White Teeth

Learn the trick discovered by a mom to turn yellow teeth white w/under \$10. [MomsTeethStory.com](#)

[Buy a link](#)

Add your comments

Please keep your comments relevant to this blog entry. **Email addresses are never displayed, but they are required to confirm your comments.**

When you enter your name and email address, you'll be sent a link to confirm your comment, and a password. To leave another comment, just use that password.

To create a live link, simply type the URL (including http://) or email address and we will make it a live link for you. You can put up to 3 URLs in your comments. Line breaks and paragraphs are automatically converted — no need to use <p> or
 tags.

<p>New Users</p> <p>Name <input type="text"/></p> <p>E-mail <input type="text"/></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Remember Me</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> E-Mail me when someone replies to this comment</p> <p>Add your comments:</p>	<p>Current Users</p> <p>E-mail: <input type="text"/></p> <p>Password <input type="text"/></p>
--	--