

**TITLE 1:** “Ask the Doctor”

**TITLE 2:**

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**KEYWORDS:**

- Diet/Exercise

**ABSTRACT OVERVIEW:** One reader asks about the connections between lactic acid built up and RLS.

**COPY OF ARTICLE:**



**Q:** Could lactic acid built up in the muscles contribute to RLS?

**A:** The issue as to whether lactic acid accumulation during anaerobic exercise might worsen RLS is an interesting one given that 85% of Icelanders with RLS report symptom worsening with exercise. In addition, recent basic research has shown that lactic acid may adversely affect conduction of peripheral nervous system signals as they enter the spinal cord. To date, however, there are no prospective studies that have carefully parceled out the relative improvement or worsening of RLS that might follow exercise and the different levels of exercise that might be best tolerated. Most patients report improvement with modest levels of exercise that likely do not produce significant amounts of lactic acid.

*David Rye, MD, PhD*

**A:** Vigorous exercise can cause buildup of lactic acid in muscles causing pain during exercise, but this subsides after exercise. In contrast, RLS may have increased symptoms after vigorous exercise has been completed, but RLS symptoms are not present during exercise. Moreover, the source of lactic acid symptoms is in the muscles and the source of RLS symptoms is believed to be in the brain.

*Robert Werra, MD*