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Pine-bark extract may help muscles

L'AQUILA, Italy, June 16 (UPI) -- A pine-bark extract has been found to improve blood flow to the muscles, which speeds recovery after physical exercise, according to European researchers.

The study of 113 participants demonstrated that natural pine bark extract Pycnogenol significantly reduces muscular pain and cramps in athletes and healthy, normal individuals, according to researchers at L'Aquila University in Italy and at the University of Wurzburg in Germany.

"With the millions of athletes worldwide, this truly is a profound breakthrough and extremely significant for all individuals interested in muscle cramp and pain relief with a natural approach," said lead researcher Dr. Peter Rohdewald. "These findings indicate that Pycnogenol can play an important role in sports by improving blood flow to the muscles and hastening post-exercise recovery."

Pycnogenol is a natural plant extract originating from the bark of the Maritime pine that grows along the coast of southwest France and is found to contain a unique combination of procyanidins, bioflavonoids and organic acids, which offer extensive natural health benefits.

The findings are published in the issue of *Angiology*.