

HOW IS IT TREATED?

(1) The RICE method is the standard initial treatment for mild sprains and strains, aimed at reducing pain and swelling. It consists of:

• Rest:

- Avoid activities that put stress on the injured area.
- This allows the damaged tissues to begin the healing process.
- Depending on the injury's location, this may involve limiting movement or avoiding weight-bearing.

• Ice:

- Apply ice packs to the injured area to minimise swelling and reduce pain.
- Crucially, never apply ice directly to the skin.
- Wrap the ice pack in a thin towel or cloth to prevent skin damage.
- Apply ice pack for 15-20 minutes at a time, followed by a 20-minute break.
- Repeat this cycle frequently during the first 24 to 48 hours.

• Compression:

- Use a compression bandage or wrap to help control swelling.
- Apply firm, even pressure, but avoid wrapping too tightly, as this can impede blood circulation.
- Ensure you can still feel sensation and warmth in the extremities below the compression.

• Elevation:

- Raise the injured area above the level of your heart.
- This helps reduce swelling by promoting fluid drainage.
- For leg injuries, this may require lying down with the leg propped up on pillows.
- If raising the injured area above the heart is not possible, keeping it parallel to the ground is still beneficial.

HOW IS IT TREATED?

The RICE protocol is most effective during the first 24 to 48 hours following the injury. This initial period is when inflammation and swelling are typically at their peak. After this period, other treatments, such as gentle movement and physical therapy, may be recommended.

(2) Manage pain and inflammation. Give an over-the-counter NSAID (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug) like ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), acetaminophen (Tylenol), or aspirin.

(3) All but the most minor sprains and strains should be evaluated by a doctor. Consult a doctor as soon as possible if there are symptoms of a possible broken bone or dislocation:

- You heard a "popping" sound with the injury.
- You can't move the injured joint or limb or bear weight on it.
- Your limb buckles when the injured joint is used.
- There is numbness.
- There is significant deformity, swelling, pain, fever, or open cuts.

HOW CAN IT BE PREVENTED?

While accidents can happen, these tips can significantly reduce your risk of sprains and strains:

- Have sufficient time for a thorough warm-up before any workout or sport.
- Do regular, moderate exercise to strengthen and stabilize your body, minimising injury risk.
- Be extra careful in hazardous conditions.
- Incorporate regular breaks and movement.
- Invest in high-quality, properly fitting equipment.



SPRAINS AND STRAINS

WHAT ARE SPRAINS & STRAINS?

- Sprains and strains are both common soft tissue injuries affecting the ligaments, muscles and tendons.
- Most can be treated at home without seeing a doctor.
- A sprain involves damage to a ligament, caused by stretching or tearing. A strain, on the other hand, affects muscles or tendons.



WHAT CAUSES IT?

Daily activities put significant stress on our bodies, leading to occasional strains and sprains. Certain conditions increase the risk of these injuries, such as:

- Athletic activities or exercise, including running or jogging.
- Accidents, such as slips, trips and falls.
- Overexerting yourself.
- Lifting heavy objects.
- Sitting, standing or working continuously in an awkward position.
- Prolonged repetitive motion.

WHAT ARE THE RISK FACTORS?

While sprains and strains can happen to anyone, certain factors significantly increase the likelihood of overstretching and injuring yourself. These include:

- Poor Physical Condition: Weak muscles and joints due to inadequate physical training.
- Improper Equipment: Using worn-out or ill-fitting gear.
- Lack of Warm-up/Cool-down: Insufficient pre- and post-activity stretching.
- Fatigue: Reduced body control and poor form due to tiredness.
- Hazardous Environment: Increased risk of falls due to slippery or icy surfaces.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Sprains or strains often present with:

- Pain, which can range from a dull ache to intense discomfort.
- Visible swelling around the injured area, indicating an inflammatory response.
- Bruising, particularly in more severe injuries, causing bluish skin discoloration.
- Tenderness, making the injured area painful to the touch.
- Restricted movement, limiting the normal range of motion of the joint or muscle.
- Sensation of instability/looseness in the joint.
- Involuntary muscle contractions or cramping.
- Decreased strength in the affected limb or area.
- Impaired weight-bearing ability, making it difficult or impossible to stand or put pressure on the injury.

HOW IS IT DIAGNOSED?

Initial Assessment:

- Your doctor will begin by taking a detailed medical history, asking about the mechanism of injury and your specific symptoms.
- A physical examination will follow, focusing on the injured area to assess for swelling, bruising, and tenderness.
- Your doctor will also evaluate your range of motion and muscle strength to determine the extent of the injury.

Imaging Studies (When Required):

- X-rays: These are primarily used to rule out fractures or other bone-related injuries.
- Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI): If a more detailed evaluation of soft tissues (muscles, tendons, and ligaments) is necessary, an MRI may be ordered to assess the severity of the damage.
- Ultrasound: This imaging technique can be used to visualize soft tissues, particularly in cases of less severe injuries.

