

# SPRAINS & STRAINS

## What is Sprains & Strains?

Sprains and strains are common injuries that share similar signs and symptoms, but involve different parts of the body.

A sprain is a stretching or tearing of ligaments—the tough bands of fibrous tissue that connect two bones together in a joint.

A strain is a stretching or tearing of muscle or tendon. A tendon is a fibrous cord of tissue that connects muscles to bone.

## What are the symptoms?

Signs and symptoms will vary, depending on the severity of the injury.

### Sprains

- Pain
- Swelling
- Bruising
- Limited ability to move the affected joint
- A “pop” that is heard or felt in the joint at the time of injury

### Strains

- Pain
- Swelling
- Muscle spasms
- Limited ability to move the affected muscle

## What causes sprains and strains?

A sprain occurs when a ligament is overextended or torn while severely stressing a joint. They often occur in the ankle, knee, wrist and thumb.

A strain occurs when a muscle becomes strained, pulled or torn when it stretches unusually far or abruptly.

## How is it treated?

Your healthcare provider will formulate a treatment plan based on the severity and degree of your injury. The usual treatment includes RICE:

- **Rest**-for 48-72 hours following injury
- **Ice**-for 15-20 minutes every 2-3 hours for the first 2-3 days
- **Compression**-use elastic bandage for 48-72 hours
- **Elevation**-when possible for the first 2-3 days

Avoid heat, massage and strenuous activity for 72 hours after the injury. Don't stop moving the affected joint or muscle to prevent stiffness.

Over the counter NSAIDS (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) may be recommended to relieve pain and inflammation. Muscle relaxers may be prescribed to relieve muscle spasms. Your healthcare provider may also order physical therapy if the injury is severe.

## How are sprains and strains prevented?

There are several ways to prevent sprains and strains:

- Regular stretching and strengthening exercises
- Proper warm-up prior to exercising
- Wear appropriate footwear and protective gear



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