

Sprains and strains

Emergency Department Patient Information Leaflet

Introduction

This leaflet is for people who have a strain or sprain injury. It includes information about what strains and sprains are, how they are treated and what you need to do when you get home.

What are strains and sprains?

A **sprain** is when ligaments stretch or tear. Ligaments are the tough tissues that connect bones, support your joints and keep the bones in place.

A **strain** is when the muscle fibres stretch or tear.

Strains and sprains do not need an X-ray to diagnose them as they cannot be seen on X-ray.

When ligaments and muscles are injured, they can be very painful.

Healing normally takes about six weeks but everyone heals at a different rate so some injuries will take longer to heal. Healing time will also depend on how serious your injury is.

How are they treated?

For the injury to recover, you need to:

- **Protect** your injury from being knocked to avoid further injury.
- **Rest** – do not do any activities that will cause your injury more pain.
- **Ice** – apply ice on your injury to reduce any swelling. You can use crushed ice or frozen peas wrapped in a damp towel. Do this for 10 minutes every four to six hours. **Caution** – ice can cause burns so do not apply it directly to your skin.
- **Elevation** – if your leg is affected, raise it above the level of your bottom. If your arm is affected, raise this above the level of your heart. Do this for the first two days.
- If you have pain, take painkillers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen, if you can take them (always read the label; do not exceed the recommended dose).

How do I protect my injury?

In the first 48 to 72 hours, it is important to **avoid the following**:

- **Heat** as this increases blood flow and swelling.
- **Alcohol** – this increases blood flow and swelling, and will slow down the healing process. It will also make it dangerous for you to start moving around.
- **Running** as this may cause further damage.
- **Massage** – this promotes blood flow and can increase swelling; therefore, it can increase the damage if it is begun too early.

Exercise

When pain allows, continue to move the injured area. If you do not move the injured joint, it will become stiff and the pain will increase. Avoid sports and heavy exercise until you are fully recovered.

We advise you to exercise the injured area gently while resting it.

What if the pain does not go?

If the pain continues after six weeks and you have not been given a follow up appointment, please contact your GP for further advice.

Can I find out more?

You can find out more from the following weblink:

NHS Choices

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Sprains/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

If you have any questions, or if there is anything you do not understand about this leaflet, please speak to one of our nurses. If you need help when you return home, please contact your GP.

This leaflet can be downloaded or printed from:

<http://dgft.nhs.uk/services-and-wards/accident-emergency/>

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet, please email dgft.patient.information@nhs.net

This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio version and in other languages, please call 0800 073 0510.

للحصول على هذه النشرة بحجم أكبر، وعلى شكل إصدار صوتي و بلغات أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال بالرقم 08000730510.

此宣传单可提供大字版本、音频版本和其它语言版本，请拨打电话：0800 073 0510。

Ulotka dostępna jest również w dużym druku, wersji audio lub w innym języku. W tym celu zadzwoń pod numer 0800 073 0510.

ਇਹ ਪਰਚਾ ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ، ਬੋਲ ਕੇ ਰੀਕਾਰਡ ਕੀਤਾ ਹੋਇਆ ਅਤੇ ਦੂਸਰੀਆਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਹੋ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ, 0800 073 0510 ਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜੀ।

Aceasta broșura poate fi pusă la dispoziție tipărită cu caractere mari, versiune audio sau în alte limbi, pentru acest lucru va rugăm sunați la 0800 073 0510.

یہ کتابچہ آپ کو بڑے حروف کی لکھائی، سمعی صورت اور دیگر زبانوں میں مہیا کیا جا سکتا ہے۔ برائے مہربانی فون نمبر 08000730510 پر رابطہ کریں۔