
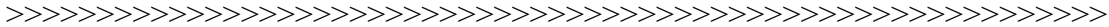


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Sprains and Strains

Sprains and strains are very common injuries affecting muscles and ligaments and most can be treated without needing to see your GP. Sprains/strains occur when your joints/muscles are overstretched or twisted which reproduces pain, swelling, bruising and tenderness around the joint.

How to treat sprains and strains yourself:

For the first few days, follow the 4 steps of RICE therapy to help bring down the swelling.

1. **Rest** – try to limit your activity and use of the injured joint
2. **Ice** – apply an ice pack to the area or a bag of frozen peas wrapped in a towel for 20 minutes 3-4 times a day to help minimise swelling
3. **Compression** – wrap a bandage around the joint to help minimise swelling however do not place too tightly as this may cause more pain and swelling
4. **Elevation** – keep the joint raised above your heart to help minimise swelling

Speaking to your Pharmacist:

Your pharmacist will be able to help with medication whilst the injury is healing. Taking paracetamol and ibuprofen can help relieve the pain however do not take ibuprofen for the first 48 hours following an injury as this may slow down the healing.

How long does it take to heal:

Sprains/strains usually start to improve within 2 weeks of the initial injury however can take up to 12 weeks to feel completely better.

Rehabilitation:

It is best to rehab your injury gradually with gentle range of movement exercises to start with. You can expect some discomfort initially however this is important so that the joint does not stiffen.

When to speak to a GP/MSK Specialist:

Seek more specialist attention if your injury does not improve with the following self-help techniques or should the pain/swelling worsen.

Please call 111 if you are unable to speak to a GP or do not know what to do next.