



## Self-care Information

# Sprains & Strains

Tips on how you can self-manage sprains & strains.

**“Supporting you to look after you.”**

### Key Points:

- Follow **PRICE** therapy for the first 2-3 days (Protection, Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevate).
- Take paracetamol to ease the pain and use ibuprofen gel, spray or mousse to bring down swelling.
- When you can move the injured area without pain, keep moving it to stop the joint or muscle becoming stiff.

Speak to your local community pharmacy for help with sprains & strains and the best treatment for you.

## What does a sprain or strain feel like?

Sprains and strains are common injuries affecting the muscles and ligaments (tissue that connects the joints). Most can be treated at home without seeing a GP and will usually feel better after 2 weeks.

It's likely to be a sprain or strain if:

- You have pain, tenderness or weakness – usually around your ankle, foot, wrist, thumb, knee, leg or back.
- The injured area is swollen or bruised.
- You cannot put weight on the injury or use it normally.
- You have muscle spasms or cramping – where your muscles painfully tighten on their own.

What is the difference?

**Sprains** are due to torn injured ligaments and are most common in wrists, ankles, thumbs and knees.

**Strains** are over-stretched or torn muscles and most common in feet, legs and back.

## What can be done to treat sprains & strains?

### You should...

- ✓ Follow the 5 steps known as **PRICE** therapy for the first 2 to 3 days to bring down swelling and support the injury.

- Protection** – protect the injury by using a support or shoes that support your foot or ankle.
- Rest** – Stop any exercise or activities and try not to put any weight on the injury.
- Ice** – Apply an ice pack (or a bag of frozen vegetables wrapped in a tea towel) to the injury for up to 20 minutes every 2 to 3 hours.
- Compression** – Wrap a bandage around the injury to support it during the day.
- Elevate** – Keep it raised on a pillow as much as possible.

- ✓ When you can move the injured area without pain try to keep moving it so the joint or muscle does not become stiff.
- ✓ Take paracetamol to help ease the pain and apply ibuprofen gel, mousse or spray to bring down swelling.

**Speak to your local community pharmacy for help with sprains & strains and the best treatment for you. Let the pharmacist know if you take any other medicines or have any allergies.**



### **Try to avoid...**

- X** Hot baths, heat packs, alcohol and massages for the first couple of days to help prevent swelling.

### **When to seek advice from NHS 111**

- Pain, swelling and bruising is getting worse.
- It hurts to put weight on it.
- It feels very stiff or is difficult to move.
- It's not feeling any better after treating it yourself.
- You also have a very high temperature or feel hot and shivery.
- You heard a crack when you had your injury.
- The injured body part has changed shape or is pointing at an odd angle.
- The injured body part is numb, tingling or has pins and needles.
- The skin around the injury has changed colour, such as looking blue or grey, or is cold to touch.

### **Here are some links to further information:**

Look at the NHS Website: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/sprains-and-strains/>

For a Patient Website: <https://patient.info/bones-joints-muscles/sports-injuries/sprains-and-strains>



**For more advice visit your local pharmacy.**