



 Please call 911 if you think you have a medical emergency.

Sprains and Strains Treatment

Self-Care at Home

Initial treatment for sprains and strains should occur as soon as possible. Remember **RICE!**

- **Rest** the injured part. Pain is the body's signal to not move an injury.
- **Ice** the injury. This will limit the swelling and help with the spasm.
- **Compress** the injured area. This again, limits the swelling. Be careful not to apply a wrap so tightly that it might act as a tourniquet and cut off the blood supply.
- **Elevate** the injured part. This lets gravity help reduce the swelling by allowing fluid and blood to drain downhill to the heart.

Over-the-counter pain medication is an option. Acetaminophen (Tylenol) is helpful for pain, but ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil, Nuprin) might be better because these medications relieve both pain and inflammation. Remember to follow the guidelines on the bottle for appropriate amounts of medicine, especially for children and teens .

Medical Treatment

Sprains and strains can usually be treated without surgery. The home treatment with **RICE** is sufficient. Some injuries, however, need operations to fix complete tears of muscles or tendons that do not allow them to do their job of moving the body. Significant tears of ligaments that stabilize joints also may need repair.

- Sometimes, resting the injury requires some help. Slings for arm injuries or crutches for leg injuries can be used, in addition to a variety of removable splints to protect the injured area from further damage and movement. Resting also helps relieve some of the muscle spasm associated with the injury.
- Occasionally, if the injury is especially severe, the physician may want to use a nonremovable splint made of plaster or fiberglass. Although the splint may look like a cast, it doesn't have plaster or fiberglass completely encircling the injured area. Instead, by only going partially around an

injury, there is some room to allow for swelling that may occur during the next few days.

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For more information, read the complete article, Sprains and Strains (<http://www.emedicinehealth.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=59263>) on <http://www.emedicinehealth.com>.

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