

Strains & Sprains Helpsheet

Strains and sprains are common soft-tissue injuries both in sport, and general day to day living. It is wise to have Advanced Clinical Massage or Sports Therapy to speed up the healing process, ensure healthy functional tissue repair and to help avoid getting chronic pain/dysfunction problems in the injured area.

Strain: Is an injury (tear or overstretching) of a muscle or tendon. These are more common than sprains.

Sprain: Is an injury (tear or overstretching) of a ligament.

What to do if you have a Strain or Sprain

Day 1-2: **PRICE Treatment** (Protect, rest, ice, compression, elevation): Protect and rest the area, to allow the initial 'tissue knitting' to occur. Avoid activity which utilises the injured area as much as possible (including walking if foot/leg/hip injury) and avoid stretching (unless the strain is just a minor 'pull'). Ice the area for 15 minutes, 5 times a day (frozen peas or ice pack wrapped in a tea towel); AVOID heat packs and hot baths. Ibuprofen gel/tablets can also be used to reduce excessive inflammation if you are having a lot of pain/heat/swelling. Compress the area if possible, especially if there is swelling; this can also be combined with icing the area. Elevate the area regularly if possible (eg. Arm on top of sofa, leg up on pillows). Book an Advanced Massage or Sports Therapy treatment for 2-3 days after the injury occurred (massage/ mobilisation contraindicated during PRICE treatment). Acupuncture, ultrasound and gentle ice massage CAN be used at this stage.

Day 3-5: **MICE Treatment** (Movement, ice, compression, elevation): Begin GENTLE MICE treatment. It is very important, from now on, to keep the area moving (in all directions) regularly throughout the day to ensure healthy, functional tissue repair and limit adhesions! Begin to take the injured area (and the joints above/below it) through their full range of movement 2 x day. Consider flexion, extension, side-bending and rotation movements. DONT take the movements too far at this stage as you don't want to re-tear healing tissue. Listen to your body, movement will be uncomfortable but don't overdo it. GENTLE stretching of the injured muscle/joint is a good idea, but again don't take the stretch too far early on. Reduce icing to 2x day unless the injury/inflammation is severe. Compression and elevation are still beneficial in more severe strains/sprains. If the injury is to the ankle/leg/hip you may need to do the movements without weight bearing (lying down)!

Day 6-14: You can stop the icing now UNLESS the area is still quite inflamed (hot/painful/swollen), then continue until the area has calmed. Introducing contrast-bathing at this point will increase the speed and quality of healing, see:

<http://altonadvancedbodywork.co.uk/workspace/documents/Contrast-RICE-Cold-Therapy-1331383172.pdf>

Keep the area moving (all the joint movements), but you can take the movements further as the area heals. Likewise you should incorporate stronger stretches (too tolerance), holding them for 2 x 30 seconds. Stretch the injured area and other surrounding muscles 2 x day, including muscles which may have tightened in reaction to the injury. Learning to use active-isolated stretching to aid tissue repair is also a great idea at this stage-ask a professional for advice. Beginning to strengthen the injured muscles/joints at this stage is also strongly recommended for on-going muscle/joint function; speak to a Sports Therapist or Physiotherapist. You can still elevate the area in the evenings if it brings you relief.

Day 15-60: As long as your injury is no longer inflamed you can now begin to use heat packs to soothe the area and promote. Continue the stretching and strengthening, EVEN IF it has stopped hurting, as soft tissue repair can take 2-3 months to complete! You may have to continue stretching/strengthening the injured area indefinitely if the injury causes chronic problems such as instability, muscle imbalance or scar tissue problems.

*** The above text is a GUIDE only. Always consult a professional for specific injury advice and treatment. Bear in mind you may need to start each stage a little earlier (if minor injury) or later (if severe injury).**

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