

NIPAWIN HOSPITAL

HOW TO TREAT A STRAIN OR SPRAIN

You have an injury to a ligament, muscle or tendon. Treating the injury will reduce the swelling and pain.

Remember "RICE":

Rest: Rest the area for 48 hours, reduce your activities, and try not to put any weight on the injured area. Using a sling, crutches, or a cane may help. Listen to your body to know how much activity you can handle.

Ice: Ice the area during the first 48 hours to reduce swelling. Avoid heat during the first 48 hours as it may increase swelling. Apply a cold pack, or a bag filled with crushed ice, or a bag of frozen peas if you don't have anything similar. To avoid frostbite, wrap the ice pack or object in a towel first. During the first 2 hours, ice the area every 20 minutes. Then ice for 20 minutes 5 times a day for the remainder of the 48 hours.

Compression: Compress the injured area to reduce the swelling by wrapping the area with a tensor bandage or other type of support bandage. If you feel numbness, tingling, or increased pain, it means the bandage is too tight. Remove the bandage every 3 to 4 hours and leave it off for 15 to 20 minutes each time.

Elevate: Elevate the injured area above heart level if possible to reduce swelling. Put your arm in a sling or place your foot or leg on a pillow.

Try an over-the-counter pain reliever such as Ibuprofen (Advil) or Acetaminophen (Tylenol) if necessary. If you sprained a finger or hand, remove your rings. Liniments or balms can help soothe sore muscles by giving a cooling or warming sensation.

When should you see a doctor?

- You have severe pain and cannot put any weight on the injured joint
- You are unable to stand on your injured leg or walk more than 4 steps without great pain
- You can't bend your joint properly
- There is an obvious deformity of the joint or limb - it looks crooked or has lumps and bumps
- There is a deep cut over the area
- You have numbness in any part of the injured area
- You injured an area that has been injured several times before
- Swelling and redness is increasing despite following RICE
- You are not sure how serious the injury is or how to care for it



For further information contact the HealthLine at 1-877-800-0002.

Reference: <http://mcgill.ca/studenthealth/information/generalhealth/sprains>