

# HOW WE HELP YOU GET OVER Sprains and Strains



Sprains and strains are common injuries to the body. These two words are often used interchangeably, yet it is important to understand that they are different types of injuries and need to be treated as such.



## What is a Sprain?

A sprain is an injury involving the stretching or tearing of a ligament (the tissue that connects bone to bone) or a joint capsule, which stabilizes and supports the body's joints.

## What causes Sprains?

- Sprains occur when a joint is forced beyond its normal range of motion, most common being ankles, knees and foot arches. Also due to:
- Direct or indirect trauma that knocks a joint out of position and overstretches and in severe cases, ruptures the supporting ligaments. For example, landing on an outstretched arm; jumping up and landing on the side of the foot; or running on an uneven surface.
- Weak muscles and poor physical shape.
- Poor stretching/warm ups before exercise.
- Lifting heavy objects.
- Hormonal changes e.g. during pregnancy.

## What are the Symptoms?

- While the intensity varies, rapid swelling, pain, bruising and inflammation are common to all three categories of sprains – mild, moderate and severe.
- The individual will usually feel a tear or pop in the joint.
- A ligament is stretched in a mild sprain, but there is no joint loosening.

- A moderate sprain partially tears the ligament, producing joint instability and some swelling.
- A severe sprain produces excruciating pain at the moment of injury, as ligaments tear completely, or separate from the bone. This loosening causes the inability to move.

## What is a Strain?

Strains are injuries that involve the twisting, pulling or tearing of a muscle and/or tendon (fibrous cords of tissue that attach muscles to bone).

## What Causes Strains?

Strains occur when a muscle is stretched and suddenly contracts, as with running or jumping. Common muscle strains include hamstrings and groin, due to:

- Overuse – prolonged, repetitive movements of muscles and tendons.
- Inadequate rest breaks during intensive training.
- A direct blow to the body, overstretching, or excessive muscle contraction.

## What are the Symptoms?

- With a mild strain, the muscle or tendon is stretched or pulled, causing pain, muscle spasm, weakness, swelling, inflammation and cramping.

- In a moderate strain, the muscle or tendon is overstretched and slightly torn and some muscle function will be lost.
- In severe strains, the muscle and/or tendon is partially or completely ruptured, often severely restricting movement.

Some common strains are:

- **Back strain or sprain:** this results when the muscles that support the spine are twisted, pulled or torn, Athletes who engage in excessive jumping, lifting heavy objects, or sedentary workers who spend all day sitting and then suddenly expect their body to cope with a rapid movement. Sprain of the delicate spinal joints often accompanies a back strain and needs chiropractic evaluation to prevent long term disability.
- Hamstring muscle strain: this is a tear or excessive stretch of a major muscle in the back of the thigh. The likely cause is muscle strength imbalance between the hamstrings and the muscles in the front of the thigh, the quadriceps. Kicking a football, running or leaping can pull a hamstring. Hamstring injuries tend to reoccur, especially if they are not treated properly but are allowed to heal.

1. Control bleeding, if present.
2. Care for shock.
3. Splint the affected area to prevent further movement, but do so only if possible without causing further pain.
4. If the lower back is the injured part, use ice which helps reduce pain and swelling.
5. Don't rest more than 24 hours, this will cause muscle weakness.
6. Don't attempt to exercise without advice.

**Mild** injuries usually heal quickly with rest, ice, compression and evaluation (RICE). Therapeutic exercise can also help restore strength and flexibility.

**Moderate** injuries are treated similarly but may require immobilization of the injured area to aid healing.

**Severe** sprains and strains usually require immobilization and possible surgery to restore function.

Chiropractors will take x-rays if necessary to rule out fractures. Heat, i.e. baths and hot packs should **NOT** be used To apply compression, use a crepe bandage or elasticated support for the extremities and a back support or even a bath towel tied around the waist for back sprains and strains.

## Treatment of Sprains and Strains

The key to recovery is an early evaluation by a Chiropractor or other medical professional. Once the injury has been determined, a treatment plan can be developed. With proper care, most sprains and strains will heal without long-term side effects. It is important in all but mild cases to have the injury evaluated and a treatment and rehabilitation plan established.

### Immediate First Aid:

Sprains and strains may be hard for someone to distinguish from fractures and dislocations. For this reason, first aid treatment must be handled as though the injury was a fracture, as in the six steps listed:

## Prevention Tips.

No one is immune to sprains and strains, but here are some tips to help reduce the risk of injury:

Participate in an exercise programme to build muscle strength.

Do stretching exercises daily.

Always wear properly fitting shoes.

Nourish your muscles by eating a well balanced diet and taking nutritional supplements.

Warm up and down when doing any sports activity.

Use or wear protective equipment appropriate for the sport you're playing.

Discard old training shoes.

**We Care About You**

Please give this to a friend or colleague if you think Chiropractic may help them.

Have them call us on 01276 21637

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