

Sprains and strains

Symptoms of sprains and strains include:

- pain around the affected joint
- being unable to use the joint normally or being unable to put weight on it
- bruising
- tenderness
- swelling
- inflammation

A sprain occurs when one or more of your ligaments have been stretched twisted or torn. This is usually as a result of excessive force being applied to a joint such as not tapping to a joint lock.

A strain occurs when the muscle fibres stretch or tear. This is usually because the muscle has been stretched beyond its limit or has been forced to contract too quickly.

X-rays

Most people with sprains and strains do not need to have X-rays. I will advise you if I think you need to attend Accident and Emergency for X-ray today.

SPRAINS AND STRAINS

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Ringside physician

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Advice for fighters who have had a sprain or strain



Treating pain

If you experience pain from a strain or sprain, paracetamol is the first type of painkiller that I recommend. This can be bought almost everywhere! If paracetamol does not help to relieve your pain, a stronger painkiller, such as cocodamol could be tried. You can buy this in a pharmacy.

Ibuprofen and Diclofenac are non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) As well as killing pain they can also help to reduce swelling and inflammation. Both can be bought in a pharmacy. Supermarkets will also stock ibuprofen. You can take NSAIDs along with paracetamol

NSAIDs are not recommended if you have a history of asthma which is worsened by these medicines or if you have stomach problems such as an ulcer.

PRICE

PRICE stands for protection, rest, ice, compression and elevation. Advice relating to each of these areas is outlined below.

- **Protection** - protect the injured area from further injury - for example, by using a support or, in the case of an ankle injury, wearing shoes that enclose and support your feet, such as lace-ups.
- **Rest** - rest the injured joint or muscle. Avoid activity for the first 48 to 72 hours after injury.
- **Ice** - for the first 48 to 72 hours after the injury, apply ice wrapped in a damp towel to the injured area for 15 to 20 minutes every two to three hours during the day. Do not allow the ice to touch your skin directly.
- **Compression** - compress or bandage the injured area to limit any swelling and movement that could damage it further. It should not be too tight. Remove the bandage before you go to sleep.
- **Elevation** - keep the injured area raised and supported on a pillow to help reduce the swelling.

Avoiding HARM

For the first 72 hours after a sprain or muscle strain you should avoid:

- **Heat** - such as hot baths, saunas or heat packs
- **Alcohol** - drinking alcohol will increase bleeding and swelling and decrease healing
- **Running** - or any other form of exercise that could cause more damage
- **Massage** - which may increase bleeding and swelling

When to seek help

- The pain is getting worse as time goes on, despite following the advice in this leaflet.
- The injured area looks crooked or has lumps or bumps (other than swelling) that are not usually present .
- The injured area looks pale or blue and feels cold.
- You have numbness in any part of the injured area.

If you have any of the above symptoms you should attend your local Accident and Emergency department. You may also visit an NHS minor injuries unit.

Outlook

By following the advice in this leaflet things should gradually improve. The amount of time this takes is variable depending on the area injured and the type of injury.

You should see your GP if the pain and function has not improved after four days of self-treatment .

You may also wish to consider involving other health professionals such as a sports medicine doctor, physiotherapist, chiropractor etc...You should also talk to your coach about your injury.