

Patient Information

## Emergency Department

# Sprains and strains

Sprains to ligaments are very common. The injury causes bruising and swelling to develop over the affected area. Commonly, pain and discomfort may persist for six to eight weeks or more from the time of injury. Usually over that time the symptoms gradually improve.

An X-ray may or may not have been necessary to assess your injury.

(A sprain is an injury to the ligaments which hold the bones together at a joint. It doesn't show up on an X-ray)

## Icepacks

- For the first 24 hours you should treat the injured part with relative rest and apply icepacks.
- **To apply an icepack**, wrap a bag of frozen peas in a damp cloth. Apply some cream or Vaseline to the skin and apply the icepack for 10 minutes.
- Repeat this every two to four hours during the first couple of days.
- **Do not leave the icepack on for longer than 10 minutes at a time**

## Rest

We recommend **relative** rest for the **first 24 hours** but this does not mean keeping the injured part completely still. If you do, the joint will be stiffer and even more painful to move, so gentle movements of the affected area should be started straight away.

## Painkillers

You should have been advised about painkillers. We recommend you take



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these regularly for the first few days both for your comfort and to enable you to move the affected area.

## Reduce swelling

The only treatment for swelling is elevation of the injured part. For upper limb injuries you may have been given a sling to wear. For lower limb injuries the best way to elevate is to sit on a sofa and put your foot up on the cushions. Your foot should be higher than your hip. You can also place a pillow under your foot in bed overnight. Swelling may continue to be a problem for several weeks especially in foot and ankle injuries.

## Exercise

- After the first 24 hours you should gradually increase the amount you are doing with the affected area and the range of movements of the joint.
- You should expect to have significant pain for the first few days. Keeping the limb/joint moving during this time is vital to prevent stiffness. If the joint becomes stiff getting it moving in warm water sometimes helps. The pain is often worse the morning after the injury.

## If you are worried

If the pain is not easing at all after four to five days or is getting worse you should return to the Emergency Department or visit your GP for further assessment.

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 024 7696 26247 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The trust operates a smoke free policy

### Document History

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