



First aid fact sheet

Sprain and strain



It can be difficult to tell whether an injury is a fracture, dislocation, sprain or strain. If in doubt, always treat as a fracture.

Signs and symptoms

Sprain

- intense pain
- restricted movement of the injured joint
- rapid development of swelling and bruising

Strain

- sharp, sudden pain in the region of the injury
- usually loss of power
- muscle tenderness

What to do

- 1 Follow DRSABCD.
- 2 Follow RICE:
 - **Rest** – rest the patient and the injured part
 - **Ice** – apply an ice pack or cold pack for 15 minutes every 2 hours for 24 hours, then for 15 minutes every 4 hours for 24 hours
 - **Compression** – apply a compression bandage firmly to extend well beyond the injury
 - **Elevation** – elevate the injured part.
- 3 Avoid HARM:
 - **Heat**
 - **Alcohol**
 - **Running** or other exercise of the injured area
 - **Massage.**
- 4 Seek medical aid.

In a medical emergency call Triple Zero (000)

DRSABCD Danger ▶ Response ▶ Send for help ▶ Airway ▶ Breathing ▶ CPR ▶ Defibrillation

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