

PERSONAL INSTRUCTIONS

What is it?

A sprain is an injury to the muscle and the ligaments, tendons, or soft tissues around a joint.

What are the symptoms?

- Pain at injury site
- Rapid Swelling
- Visible bruising

After Hours & Weekends:

Ask - A - Nurse

Free health care information &
physician referral

24 hours a day

Call 594-2000

Ask for Ask – A - Nurse

SPRAINS



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Home Treatment

The basic treatment of a sprain includes rest, ice, compression and elevation.

(R-I-C-E)

Begin this process immediately for most injuries. If you suspect a fracture, splint the affected limb to prevent further injury.

Rest. Do not put weight on the injured joint for at least 24 to 48 hours.

- Use crutches to support a badly sprained knee or ankle.
- Support a sprained wrist, elbow or shoulder with a sling, in order to help the injury heal faster.
- Rest a sprained finger or toe by taping it to a healthy one.

Ice. Cold will reduce pain and swelling and promote healing. Heat feels nice, but it does more harm than good while all of the swelling still present.

- Apply ice or cold packs immediately to prevent or minimize swelling. Apply ice for 20 minutes intervals 4 times a day for the first 48 hours. For difficult to reach injuries a cold pack works best.
- A bag of frozen peas makes a great ice pack and conforms easily around odd areas.

Compression. Wrap the injury with an elastic (Ace) bandage or compression

sleeve to immobilize and compress the sprain. Don't wrap it too tight, because it can cause more swelling.

Loosen the bandage if it gets too tight. A tightly wrapped sprain may fool you into thinking you can keep using the joint. With or without a wrap, the joint needs total rest for one to two days.

Elevation. Elevate the injured area on pillow while you apply ice and anytime you are sitting or lying down. Try to keep the injury at or above the level of your heart to help minimize swelling.

The second phase of treatment

includes M-S-A (movement strength alternating activity) to help the injury heal completely and to prevent further problems.

Medications (nonprescription) can be helpful in relieving discomfort of a sprain. Aspirin, ibuprofen, or naproxen, may help ease inflammation and pain. Do not use drugs to mask the pain while you continue to use the injured joint. Do not give aspirin to children or teens under age 20.

When to Call the Doctor

- If a bone is poking through the skin, or if a limb below the injury is white, cold, or numb.
- If you suspect a severe sprain or fracture, you should stop weight-bearing activities, splint the injury, and applied ice. A short delay in receiving professional care will not affect the outcome.
- If a sprained joint is very unstable and will not support your weight, or wobbles from side to side.
- If you cannot bear weight on a sprained ankle after 24 hours.
- If it hurts to bear weight after three days.
- If pain is still severe after two days of home treatment.
- If a sprain does not improve after four days of home treatment.