

## SPRAINS & STRAINS

**HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?** 6-8 weeks

**HOW SERIOUS IS IT?** Mild

**CAN I STILL WORK?** Yes

### WHAT IS IT?

Sprains are due to injured ligaments and often affect the thumb, wrist, ankle and knee. Typical symptoms of a sprain include pain around a joint, swelling, tenderness, and an inability to use the joint normally. Swelling often occurs almost immediately, whereas the onset of bruising may be delayed.

Muscle strains are caused by over-stretching or tearing of muscle fibres and are common in the legs and lower back – particularly in people who are unfit or do not use good sporting techniques. Muscle strains usually lead to muscle pain and swelling, bruising, and reduced limb function.



### HOW DO I TREAT IT?

- Remember PRICE
  - Protect the affected limb,
  - Rest it,
  - use Ice,
  - use Compression bandages
  - Elevation.
- Avoid exercise in the first 72 hours after an injury.
- If you've suffered a sprain, gently move your limb in all possible directions (as soon as your pain allows) to increase and maintain flexibility.
- If you have a strain keep the affected muscle still for a few days after the injury before starting to move it again.

### MEDICINES:

Painkillers and rubbing ointments are widely available over the counter.

### WHEN DO I NEED MEDICAL ATTENTION?

Warning symptoms and signs include:

- Your symptoms don't start to improve after three to four days of self-treatment.
- You can't walk because of your injury, or an affected leg 'gives way' and makes you walk unsteadily.
- The affected body part is deformed, or shows lumps or bumps.
- You can't move an affected joint.
- Your skin over the affected area feels numb.
- You notice more than only mild bruising and swelling.