

Strains and Sprains: What You Should Know

Construction work is a physically demanding job, and there may be times when you accidentally overexert yourself and suffer a strain or sprain. It's important for you to recognize your injury and know how to treat it.

A strain is an injury caused by overstretching a muscle. A sprain is an injury to the tissue surrounding a joint. These injuries can cause pain and swelling. You can have both injuries at the same time.

How to Treat Your Injury

Just remember R.I.C.E. when you have a strain or sprain.

R=Rest: Avoid putting weight on the injured joint for 24 to 48 hours.

Support a sprained wrist, elbow or shoulder with a sling. Tape a sprained finger or toe to a healthy one.

I=Ice: Immediately apply ice or cold packs to the injured area to reduce swelling. Place a cloth between your skin and the ice or cold pack. Use for 10 minutes every hour.

C=Compression: Wrap the injury with a flexible cloth bandage or compression sleeve to further reduce swelling.

E=Elevation: Try to keep the injured area raised above your heart.

More Tips

- Relieve pain and inflammation with aspirin, ibuprofen or naproxen.
- When pain and swelling have subsided, begin gently moving and stretching the injured joint and gradually phase in strengthening exercises.
- Report all injuries to your supervisor.
- Seek medical attention if there are any signs that your injury is serious



SIGNS IT MAY BE MORE THAN A STRAIN OR SPRAIN

- ✓ intense pain and swelling (indicating a possible fracture)
- ✓ a cold, blue or numb area beyond the injury
- ✓ a misshapen or very unstable joint that won't support your weight or wobbles from side to side
- ✓ severe pain after two days of home treatment
- ✓ no improvement after four days