

FIRST AID FACT SHEET

Sprains and Strains

A sprain is a severe wrench or twist of the ligaments, such as an ankle, wrist or other joint, that causes pain and swelling.

A strain is a force tending to pull or stretch muscles or tendons causing damage.

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

Caused by

- + Falling and landing on arm.
- + Fall on the side of the foot.
- + Twisting a joint.

Signs & symptoms

- + Pain.
- + Swelling.
- + Bruising.
- + Loss of power.
- + Tenderness.
- + Muscle spasm.

What to do

1. Follow DRSABCD St John Action Plan.
2. Rest and reassure the casualty.
3. Manage as a fracture if any doubt.
4. Follow the **RICE** management plan:
 - + **REST** the casualty and the injured part.
 - + **ICEPACK** (cold compress) for fifteen (15) minutes.
 - + **COMPRESSION** bandage after the icepack – apply firmly and extend well beyond the injury.
 - + **ELEVATE** the limb.

Rules when using icepacks

- + Wrap icepack in a damp cloth.
 - + Apply to the injured site for fifteen (15) minutes and then reapply every two (2) hours for first twenty-four (24) hours.
 - + Never apply ice directly to the skin or onto an open wound. If no ice is available use a cloth wrung out in cold water – this will need replacing every ten (10) minutes.
5. Seek medical attention if in doubt or if no improvement after RICE.



In a medical emergency
call **Triple Zero (000)**

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