SPRAINS & STRAINS

Ensure the safety of self and others before providing first aid.

The initial treatment after sustaining a sprain or a strain (soft tissue injury) is crucial in ensuring the best outcome.

This type of injury can cause bruising and swelling in the injured area.

Too much swelling can cause more damage.

Use RICER first aid and avoid HARM to help limit swelling and speed up recovery.

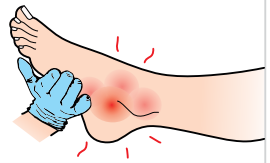
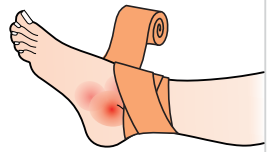
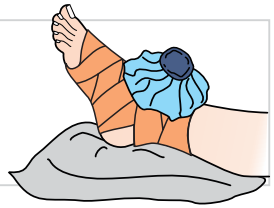
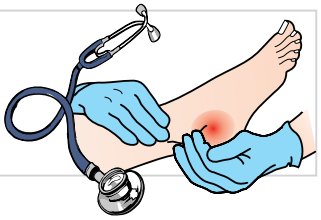
Signs and Symptoms

Sprain - Joint injury - tearing of the ligaments and joint capsule. Commonly, thumb, ankle and wrist.

Strain - Injury to muscle or tendons. Commonly the calf, groin and hamstring.

Signs and symptoms for the injured area:

- Pain/tenderness.
- Can't stand on injured leg or move wrist without pain.
- Discolouration, swelling, stiffness.
- Decreased function.

R	Stop the activity, move to a rest area, stop movement.	**REST** To reduce further damage.	
I	Apply ice or cold packs for 10 - 20 minutes, every 1.5 - 4 hours, for up to 72 hours.	**ICE** To reduce pain and swelling.	
C	Use a crepe bandage, overlap by half, on, above and below the injury, firmly, not too tight.	**COMPRESSION** To reduce bleeding and bruising.	
E	Raise legs above hips, use a sling for arm injuries. Comfort with pillows or something soft.	**ELEVATION** Provide comfort.	
R	Referring the casualty to a doctor or physiotherapist increases the likelihood of a full recovery.	**REFER** To a qualified professional.	

Avoid H.A.R.M. For 48-72 hours, avoid heat, alcohol, running/exercise or massage.

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