



How to treat sprains and strains

A sprain occurs when one or more of your ligaments have been stretched, twisted or torn. A strain occurs when the muscle fibres stretch or tear. You can treat most sprains and strains at home and your symptoms should improve in a few days:

- Protect the affected area by supporting it, for example by resting a sprained ankle on a cushion.
- Rest up as much as possible to take pressure off the injury.
- Use an ice pack for 20 minutes every 2-3 hours, use a tea towel to stop the ice being in direct contact with skin.
- Once the swelling has started to go down, use a bandage to compress the area and provide further support.
- Elevate the affected area by raising above the level of your heart, for example by lying down and raising an injured leg with cushions.
- For painful sprains or strains, paracetamol is usually recommended and your local pharmacy can give advice.

Most injuries will heal within a few days. If you are still experiencing symptoms or the pain is getting worse, please call NHS 111 or your GP for advice.



when it's less
urgent than 999

NHS 111 is a free 24 hour service and will give you healthcare advice or direct you to the local service that is best for you.