

Sprains and Strains

FIRST AID FACT SHEET

How to provide first aid for sprains and strains

A sprain is a severe wrench or twist of the ligaments, such as an ankle, wrist or another 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 it as a fracture.**

What to do

Unconscious casualty

1. Follow DRSABCD St John Action Plan (<https://stjohnwa.com.au/online-resources/first-aid-information-and-resources/drsabcd-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.

Caused by

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

Signs and symptoms

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