



# First aid fact sheet

## Sprain and strain



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

### Signs and symptoms

#### Sprain

- intense pain
- restricted movement of the injured joint
- rapid development of swelling and bruising

#### Strain

- sharp, sudden pain in the region of the injury
- usually loss of power
- muscle tenderness

### What to do

- 1 Follow DRSABCD.
- 2 Follow RICE:
  - **Rest** – rest the patient and the injured part
  - **Ice** – apply an ice pack or cold pack for 15 minutes every 2 hours for 24 hours, then for 15 minutes every 4 hours for 24 hours
  - **Compression** – apply a compression bandage firmly to extend well beyond the injury
  - **Elevation** – elevate the injured part.
- 3 Avoid HARM:
  - **Heat**
  - **Alcohol**
  - **Running** or other exercise of the injured area
  - **Massage.**
- 4 Seek medical aid.

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

**DRSABCD** Danger ► Response ► Send for help ► Airway ► Breathing ► CPR ► Defibrillation

You could save a life with first aid training • [www.stjohn.org.au](http://www.stjohn.org.au) • **1300 360 455**

This information is not a substitute for first aid training. Formal instruction in resuscitation is essential. St John Ambulance Australia is not liable for any damages or incidents that may occur in the use of this information by other parties or individuals. This is not for commercial distribution. © St John Ambulance Australia 2022.