

## Self-Care for Sprains and Strains

Your health and safety are very important to us. Because of the large number of people with the flu, hospitals and emergency rooms are very busy. As a result, we are closely evaluating who we can take in the ambulance to the hospital.

We have evaluated that you do not need to go in the ambulance to the hospital at this time. Paramedics are giving you this sheet to help you care for yourself at home.

You can get medical care at a clinic, urgent care center or an emergency room. If you decide to do so, you will need to get to these places on your own. Remember hospitals are seeing a lot of patients with the flu. If you go to a hospital you risk getting infected with the flu.

Most minor sprains and strains can be treated with self-care. Recovering from a sprain or strain may take 6-8 weeks. Your self-care goal is to reduce pain and to speed the recovery process.

### **Support the Injured Area**

Wrapping the injured area provides support for short, necessary activities. Be careful not to wrap the area too tightly. This could cut off blood supply.

- Support a wrist, elbow, or shoulder with a sling.
- Wrap an ankle or knee with an elastic bandage.
- Tape a finger or toe to the one next to it.

### **Use Cold and Heat**

Cold reduces swelling. It works best if started immediately after injury. Use ice several times a day for the first two days. Both cold and heat reduce pain. When using cold or heat, always place a towel between the pack and your skin.

- Apply ice or a cold pack 10-15 minutes every hour you are awake, for the first two days.
- After the swelling goes down, use cold or heat to control pain.

### **Rest and Elevate**

Rest and elevation will help your injury heal faster.

- Raise the injured area above your heart level.
- At first limit the use of the injured area.
- Gently increase the use of the injured area using pain as your guide. If it hurts too much, back off on the activity.

## Use Medications if needed

- Medications such as acetaminophen, ibuprofen, or naprosyn can help to relieve pain. You can buy these without a prescription. Follow correct dosing recommendations on the bottle label.
- **Do not use aspirin in anyone 18 years old or younger if they have a fever. Aspirin and some viral illnesses can cause a deadly reaction called Reye Syndrome.**

## Call Your Doctor If:

- The injured area will not move, or bones make a grating sound when they move.
- You cannot put weight on the injured area after 24 hours.
- The injured body part becomes cold, blue, or numb.
- The joint or limb appears bent or crooked.
- Pain increases or does not improve in 4 days.

This information is to help you care for a strain or a sprain.

The evaluation and/or treatment by the paramedics today are not to replace the recommendation of a doctor.

You can get medical care by a doctor on your own.

You should call 911 for any medical symptom, concerns that happen after we leave today.



These Home Care Instructions are for use during specified times of severe pandemic influenza, courtesy of the Metro Region EMS System, Metro Emergency Services Board, 2099 W. University Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55014-3431