



# 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.**