



What to do if your child has a strain or sprain

Sprains and strains are common injuries affecting the muscles and ligaments. Most can be treated at home without seeing a GP.

For the first few days, follow the 4 steps known as RICE therapy to help reduce pain, bring down the swelling and support the injury:

Rest- stop any exercise or activities and try not to put any weight on the injury

Ice- apply an ice pack (or a bag of frozen vegetables wrapped in a tea towel) to the injury for up to 20 minutes every 2 to 3 hours.

Compression- wrap a bandage around the injury to support it

Elevate- keep it raised on a pillow as much as possible.

To help prevent swelling, try to avoid heat- such as hot baths and heat packs for the first couple of days. When your child can move the injured area without pain stopping them, encourage them to try to keep moving it so the joint or muscle does not become stiff. Painkillers like paracetamol will ease the pain and ibuprofen will bring down the swelling, however do not use Ibuprofen for the first 48 hours after the injury as it may slow down healing. After 2 weeks, most sprains and strains will feel better. Avoid strenuous exercise such as running for up to 8 weeks, as there is a risk of further damage.

When to get medical help

Call NHS111 or visit your local walk-in centre, minor injuries unit or GP surgery if

- The injury isn't feeling any better after treating it yourself
- The pain or swelling is getting worse